The Gospel of the *Memra*: Jewish Binitarianism and the Prologue to John

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For Elizabeth Busky, with gratitude

Most Christian and Jewish scholars have been heavily invested in asserting the radical difference and total separation of Christianity from Judaism at a very early period. Thus we find the following view expressed by one of the leading historians of dogma in our time, Basil Studer:

> From the socio-political point of view Christianity fairly soon broke away from Judaism. Already by about 130 the final break had been effected. This certainly contributed to an even greater openness towards religious and cultural influences from the Greco-Roman environment. Not without reason, then, it is exactly at that time that the rise of antijudaistic and hellenophile gnostic trends is alleged. Christian theology began gradually

[1]I wish to thank the following colleagues and friends who have commented on earlier versions of this paper and contributed much to whatever success its final form bears: Daniel Abrams, Carlin Barton, François Bovon, Virginia Burrus, Harvey Cox, Richard Hays, Karen King, Catherine Keller, Helmut Koester, Moshe Idel, Stephen D. Moore, Maren Niehoff, Birger Pearson, Dina Stein, Krister Stendahl, Rob Wall, and Azzan Yadin, as well as the graduate students in my seminar on the Fourth Gospel at Harvard Divinity School in the spring of 2000. A shorter version was delivered as a public lecture at HDS, 24 April 2000. In addition to the above-mentioned colleagues, others asked good and useful questions at this lecture, too. Virginia Burrus was also, as frequently in the last several years, a vital conversation partner in the generation of these ideas. I alone take responsibility in the end for both ideas and form. Gratitude as well to Asi, Tsahi, Hila, and Na'ama for making a stay in Jerusalem while I was completing this essay incomparably more pleasant.

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> to draw away from Judaic tendencies. . . . In the course of separation from the Synagogue and of rapprochement with the pagan world, theology itself became more open towards the thinking of antiquity with its scientific methods. This is particularly evident in the exegesis of Holy Scripture in which the chasm separating it from rabbinic methods broadened and deepened, whereas the ancient art of interpretation as it was exercised especially in Alexandria gained the upper hand.[2]

Studer's picture is a fairly typical one. Even as sophisticated a commentator as James D. G. Dunn, who realizes that "the parting of the ways, if we can already so speak, was at this point also as much a parting of the ways *within* the new movement as *between* Christianity and Judaism, or better, as within Judaism,"[3] still feels moved to insist that "after the second revolt [132–135] the separation of the main bodies of Christianity and Judaism was clear-cut and final, whatever interaction there continued to be at the margins."[4] Nor is this view confined to Christian scholars, of course. One of the leading Israeli historians has put it thus: "With the Bar Kokhba rising the final rift between Judaism and Christianity was complete."[5]

One of the clearest symbols of this separation at the theological level has been the centrality of Logos theology in Christianity from a very early date, a Logos theology that has been considered to have very little to do with "authentic" or "proper" Palestinian Judaism. The name of Rudolf Bultmann has been emblem-

[2]Basil Studer, *Trinity and Incarnation: The Faith of the Early Church* (ed. Andrew Louth; trans. Matthias Westerhoff; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1993) 14.

[3]James D. G. Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways Between Christianity and Judaism and Their Significance for the Character of Christianity* (London: SCM; Philadelphia: Trinity, 1991) 135. Since for Dunn, and I think quite compellingly so, the major departure from anything like the Jewish Koine of any first-century "Christian" is Paul's rejection of the Law (for my defense of this interpretation of Paul, see Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* [Contraversions: Critical Studies in Jewish Literature, Culture, and Society; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994]), the primary gap would be between "Christian" and "Christian," not between "Christian" and "Jew." Not surprisingly, in Paul's own works his conflicts with other Jewish Christians are much more marked than his conflicts with "Jews."

[4]Dunn, *Partings*, 238.

[5]Yitzhaq Baer, "Israel, the Christian Church, and the Roman Empire from the Time of Septimius Severus to the Edict of Toleration of A.D. 313," in *Studies in History* (ed. Alexander Fuks and Israel Halpern; Scripta Hierosolymitana 7; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1961) 82. It should be emphasized that a new generation of Israeli scholars, including as a representative sample Galit Hasan-Rokem, "Narratives in Dialogue: A Folk Literary Perspective on Interreligious Contacts in the Holy Land in Rabbinic Literature of Late Antiquity," in *Sharing the Sacred: Religious Contacts and Conflicts in the Holy Land: First–Fifteenth Centuries CE* (ed. Guy Stroumsa and Arieh Kofsky; Jerusalem: Yad Ben Zvi, 1998) 109–29 and Israel Jacob Yuval, "Jews and Christians in the Middle Ages: Shared Myths, Common Language," in *Demonizing the Other: Antisemitism, Racism, and Xenophobia* (ed. Robert S. Wistrich; Studies in Antisemitism 4; Chur: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1999) 88–107, among others, are changing this picture dramatically.

atic of this position.[6] Bultmann famously read the Prologue to the Fourth Gospel as a hymn which came from sources outside of Judaism, from "Mandaism" or some version of a gnostic group.[7] This interpretation supported Bultmann's overall conviction that the Gospel ought be read as quite distant from "Judaism."[8] As Dunn has put it, Bultmann's work led to a perception of "Christianity [that] very quickly distanced itself from its distinctively Jewish matrix and from a characteristically Jewish Jesus."[9] In 1962, J. A. T. Robinson noted that there was much in the Gospel of John that seemed to indicate a close connection with first-century Palestinian realia, but that "it could still be argued that the Logos theology (for which the [Dead Sea Scrolls] provide no parallel) locates the Gospel both in place and time at a considerable remove from the Palestinian scene which it purports to describe."[10]

[6]Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (trans. G. R. Beasley-Murray; Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1971) 21.

[7]For an especially clear, concise, and convenient version of Bultmann's approach, see Rudolf Bultmann, "The History of Religions Background of the Prologue to the Gospel of John," in *The Interpretation of John* (ed. John Ashton; Studies in New Testament Interpretation; 1923; repr., Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997) 27–46, esp. 43. "If my supposition is correct, then in the Gospel of John we have fresh proof of the extraordinarily early impact of eastern gnostic speculations upon early Christianity." As Bultmann remarks, in a passage cited below, these "eastern gnostic speculations" come from anywhere but "Judaism." In contrast to this, Moshe Idel, "Meṭaṭron: Notes Towards the Development of Myth in Judaism" [in Hebrew], in *Eshel Beer-Sheva: Occasional Publications in Jewish Studies* [Beer-sheva, Israel: Ben-Gurion University of the Negev Press, 1996] 41), traces direct continuity from biblical angel speculation down to the Kabbalah, "so much so that it is difficult to see the necessity for gnostic influences that stimulated the development of Jewish thought." See also much later and more definitively: "The Logos concept of the Prologue does not have its origin in the philosophical tradition of Hellenism, but in mythology" (Bultmann, *John*, 13 n. 1), by which Bultmann surely means something "Oriental" and "gnostic," as is seen explicitly in 24–31 of the Commentary, and especially 29, to wit, "It [the Prologue to John] belongs to the sphere of early oriental Gnosticism."

[8]Bultmann, *John*, 21. Part of the issue is that for Bultmann "Judaism" is a reified entity, such that one could make the claim that "the Wisdom myth was not as such a living force in Judaism; it was only a mythological and poetic decking-out of the doctrine of the law. Everything that the myth related of Wisdom was transferred to the Torah: the Torah is pre-existent; she was God's plan of creation and instrument of creation; Wisdom, being in some sense incarnate in the law, has found in Israel a dwelling, prepared for her by God. But the Wisdom myth does not have its origin in the OT or in Israel at all; it can only spring from pagan mythology; the Israelite Wisdom poetry took over the myth and de-mythologized it" (Bultmann, *John*, 23). The very limitations of the "history of religions" method are here approached with its apparently clear distinctions between "pagan," "Israelite," "Jewish," and "Christian." Thus, according to Bultmann, even the Book of Daniel doesn't quite make it as authentically "Jewish"; it is "syncretistic" (Bultmann, *John*, 27).

[9]Dunn, *Partings*, 9.

[10]James A. T. Robinson, "The Relationship of the Prologue to the Gospel of St. John," *NTS* 9 (1962) 128. Once again, in fairness, I wish to point out that the judicious Robinson qualifies his statement appropriately.

The lion's share of the Hellenic thinking of early Christianity—and most centrally, Logos theology—was, however, an integral part of the first-century Jewish world. The following (almost contrary) narrative seems at least equally as plausible: "Judaism(s)" and "Christianit(ies)" remained intertwined well past the first half of the second century until Rabbinic Judaism in its nativist attempt to separate itself from its own history of now "Christian" logos theology began to try to imagine itself a community free of Hellenism.[11] In some areas, western Asia almost certainly one of them, Gentile converts began to overwhelm—in numbers—Christian Jews at a fairly early date. They brought with them, almost inevitably, "hellenophile" and then "antijudaistic" tendencies.[12] But Jewish theology itself had been for centuries "open towards the thinking of antiquity," and the binary opposition between the Jewish and the Hellenistic (as well as the binary opposition between Palestinian and Hellenistic Judaism) requires major rethinking. Judaism is, from the very beginning, from its very origins, a Hellenistic form of culture.[13] Rabbinic Judaism, on the other hand, can be seen as a nativist reaction movement that imagines itself a community free of Hellenism.

Thus, the very "Alexandrian" art of interpretation—named by Studer as his prime exemplum of how "theology itself became more open towards the thinking of antiquity with its scientific methods," originated in the world of Philo Ioudaios,

[11]I shall be defending this interpretation in the larger work for which this essay is a study, tentatively entitled, *Making a Difference: How Christianity Created the Jewish Religion*.

[12]The impact of the early Pauline congregations in this area would have been, *ex hypothesi*, one of the leading factors in the production of this kind of Christianity, in opposition, perhaps to the Petrine Christianity that typified Palestine and Syria. Justin, one of the earliest manifestations of this form of Christianity, may have been significantly influenced by the Pauline letters, as argued recently by David Rokéaḥ, *Justin Martyr and the Jews* (in Hebrew, Kuntresim: Texts and Studies 84; Jerusalem: Hebrew University, Dinur Center for Research in Jewish History, 1998). Although this position is contra the consensus of Justin scholarship today, my own research on Galatians and Justin suggests to me that it is, at least, arguably the case. It is in Justin's writing that we find for the first time several topoi of a distinct anti-Judaic Christian identity, among them the notion that Israel has been replaced for its sins by a new Israel and also the notion that the "Jews" are responsible for pagan hostility to Christians (Dialogue 17.1, in *Justin Martyr: The Dialogue with Trypho* [trans. A. L. Williams; Translations of Christian Literature; London: SPCK, 1930] 34–35), a topos that would appear frequently later in west Asian texts (Judith Lieu, "Accusations of Jewish Persecution in Early Christian Sources, with Particular Reference to Justin Martyr and the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*," in *Tolerance and Intolerance in Early Judaism and Christianity* [ed. Graham N. Stanton and Guy G. Stroumsa; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998] 279–95). For a reconstruction similar to mine, however without marking its specifically west Asian nature, see Birger Pearson, "The Emergence of the Christian Religion," in *The Emergence of the Christian Religion: Essays on Early Christianity* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1997) 17.

[13]"Hellenistic ways of life, thought and expression were integral to Jewish Palestinian culture from at least the mid-third century [B.C.] on, and these tendencies affected Pharisaism and later Rabbinic writings. Hellenistic schools were especially influential on Jewish modes

not, after all, medieval legend to the contrary, with Philo Christianus.[14] Christian exegesis, insofar as it continues this, follows from a "Judaistic" world. Rabbinic methods, too, can be shown to have been known to the earliest Christian writers. Along with logocentric interpretation, Logos theology originates in the world of Philo Ioudaios, and, moreover, is not an idiosyncrasy of only that writer.

■ The Logos of the Jews

> In dualistic circles of thought, where the tendency was increasingly to represent the Deity as the Absolute in order to free Him from all association with matter, the Reason of God, tending toward, but not yet properly having become, a separate personality, that phase of God which connected God's otherwise Absolute nature with the world[, . . . the] Logos then in all circles but the Stoic . . . was a link of some kind which connected a transcendent Absolute with the world and humanity. The Logos came into general popularity because of the wide-spread desire to conceive of God as transcendent and yet immanent at the same time. The term Logos in philosophy was not usually used as the title of a

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of organization and expression. The emergence of definable sects, Pharisees, Sadducees, etc. and more importantly the attention given to them fits most comfortably into the Greco-Roman world with its recognized philosophical schools, religious societies and craft assocations" (Anthony Saldarini, *Scholastic Rabbinism: A Literary Study of the Fathers according to Rabbi Nathan* [Chico, Ca.: Scholars Press, 1982] 19). My only emendation to this important statement would be to abandon language of "influence" and simply understand that "Judaism" is itself a species of Hellenism. See the formulation in Saldarini, *Scholastic*, 21, which comes closer, I think, to this perspective. Cf. most recently Lee I. Levine, *Judaism and Hellenism in Antiquity: Conflict or Confluence* (The Samuel & Althea Stroum Lectures in Jewish Studies; Seattle, Wash.: University of Washington Press, 1998). This perspective entails a revision of such formulations as, "It has often seemed plausible that a Hellenistic Judaism, like Philo's but less sophisticated, was the background for Justin's and Theophilus' writing" (Alan F. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports about Christianity and Gnosticism* [*SJLA* 25; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977] 167). See now also M. J. Edwards, "Justin's Logos and the Word of God," *JECS* 3 (1995): 261–80. Raymond E. Brown already understood this point well in his introduction to his commentary on John (*The Gospel according to John* [2 vols.; AB; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1966] 1:lvi). See also Larry W. Hurtado, *One God, One Lord: Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism* (2d ed., 1988; repr., Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998) esp. 7–9: "So, if we use the term 'Palestinian Judaism' to mean the religion and culture of the Jews living in Palestine at that time, it designates a bilingual phenomenon which included within it significant variation."

[14] J. E. Bruns, "Philo Christianus: The Debris of a Legend," *HTR* 66 (1973) 141–45. It is not even absolutely and entirely clear that Philo had no *Nachleben* at all in some Jewish writing. See S. Poznanski, "Philon dans l'ancienne littérature judéo-arabe," *REJ* 50 (1905) 10–31.

unique attribute of God, but rather as the most important single name among many applicable to the effulgent Power of God which reasonably had shaped and now governs the world. (E. R. Goodenough)

What Goodenough does not emphasize enough, however, is how thoroughly first-century Judaism has absorbed (or produced!) these central "Middle Platonic" theological notions.[15] The idea that the Logos/Sophia (and other variants as well) was the site of God's presence in the world—indeed of God's Word or Wisdom as a mediator figure—was a very widespread one in the thought-world of first-century and even second-century Judaism.[16] Rather than treating Logos theology, therefore, as the specific product of "Christianity," with Philo a sort of Christian *avant la lettre*,[17] I wish to explore the evidence for Logos theology as a common element in much Jewish, including Christian Jewish, religious imagination. As Dunn has recently written of Wisdom christology: "*the usage is Jewish through and through*."[18]

A comparative study of Philo's Logos, the *Memra* of the Targum, and the Prologue to the Fourth Gospel supports this suggestion. Although the targumic material and Philo have been much discussed as contiguous with the Johannine Logos, these linkages are currently out of favor,[19] so it seems not beside the point to rehearse in brief the considerations in favor of these affiliations. One possible implication of this suggestion would be to counterbalance such a remark as that of

[15]Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough, *The Theology of Justin Martyr: An Investigation into the Conceptions of Early Christian Literature and Its Hellenistic and Judaistic Influences* (Amsterdam: Philo, 1968) 140–41.

[16]Leslie W. Barnard, *Justin Martyr: His Life and Thought* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1967). To the evidence that I shall be offering below in some detail, we might add the figure Yahoʾel, in the probably second-century *Apocalypse of Abraham*, 10.3 and passim (ed. and trans. G. H. Box; *Apocalypse of Abraham* [TED; London: SPCK, 1918] nn.). See the important discussion in Darrell D. Hannah, *Michael and Christ: Michael Traditions and Angel Christology in Early Christianity* (WUNT; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999) 52–54. Also: "Apparently, Justin Martyr also knew of Jews who allowed one name of God to refer to something like a *Logos*, but refused to identify the *Logos* with Jesus as he had done" (Segal, *Powers*, 13). See also W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology* (2d ed.; 1955; repr., London: SPCK, 1965) 147–76 and Siegfried Schulz, *Untersuchungen zur Menschensohn-Christologie im Johannesevangelium zugleich ein Beitrag zur Methodengeschichte der Auslegung des 4. Evangeliums* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1957). I wish to thank Prof. François Bovon for directing my attention to this last source.

[17]Bruns, "Philo Christianus." See also David T. Runia, *Philo in Early Christian Literature: A Survey* (CRINT; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993) 3–33.

[18]Dunn, *Partings*, 195 (emphasis original).

[19]"*Memra* is a blind alley in the study of the biblical background of John's Logos doctrine" (C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text* [London: SPCK, 1978] 128), and why? Simply because of the assertion that "מימרא however was not truly a hypostasis but a means of speaking about God without using

Basil Studer, who claims that "first it has to be fully acknowledged that the beginning of trinitarian reflection was made because of the Easter experience, understood in apocalyptic terms."[20] It is at least possible that the beginning of trinitarian reflection was precisely in non-Christian Jewish accounts of the second and visible God, variously, the Logos (*Memra*), Wisdom, or even perhaps the Son of God.[21]

■ Philo's Logos

> The doctrine of the Logos, the linchpin of Philo's religious thought . . .
> (David Winston)

Winston has pointed out that, although we can know very little of the philosophical context of Philo's writing, we can determine from the writings themselves that Logos theology is "something his readers will immediately recognize without any further explanation."[22] The consequences of this point are formidable. Philo was clearly writing for an audience of Jews devoted to the Bible. If for these, the Logos theology was a virtual commonplace (which is not to say that there were not enormous variations in detail, of course), the implication is that this way of thinking about God was a vital inheritance of (at least) Alexandrian Jewish thought. It becomes apparent, therefore, that for one branch of pre-Christian Judaism, at least, there was nothing strange about a doctrine of a *deuteros theos*, and nothing in that doctrine that precluded monotheism. Moreover, Darrell Hannah has emphasized that "neither in Platonism, Stoicism nor Aristotelian thought do we find the kind of significance that the concept has for Philo, nor the range of meanings that he gives to the term λόγος," and, therefore, that "he appears to be dependent upon a tradition in Alexandrian Judaism which was attributing a certain independence to

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his name, and thus a means of avoiding the numerous anthropomorphisms of the Old Testament." It seems never to have occurred to any of those who hold this view how self-contradictory it is, as I will argue later. See also, e.g., Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John* (London: Burns & Oates; New York: Herder & Herder, 1968) 484–87.

[20]Studer, *Trinity*, 39.

[21]Other designations were used as well. See Jarl Fossum, "Jewish-Christian Christology and Jewish Mysticism," *VC* 37 (1983) 260–87; Jarl Fossum, *The Name of God and the Angel of the Lord: Samaritan and Jewish Conceptions of Intermediation and the Origin of Gnosticism* (WUNT; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1985) 333. For the Logos as the "first-begotten son of the Uncreated Father" in Philo, see David Winston, *Logos and Mystical Theology in Philo of Alexandria* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1985) 16. Cf. Dunn, *Partings*, 202–3. Cf. also: "If Philo remains within the spectrum of recognizable and acceptable first-century Judaism, would the same not be true for Hebrews also? It would be hard to answer anything other than Yes" (Dunn, *Partings*, 211), with which "Yes" I heartily concur.

[22]Winston, *Logos*, 11. So also Segal, *Powers*, 163: "There were others in Philo's day who spoke of a 'second god' but who were not as careful as Philo in defining the limits of that term."

God's word."[23] He sees the sources of that tradition as in part growing out of the Israelite Prophets themselves, at least in their Septuagint hypostasis. As he has formulated it,

> "The Greek OT could be read as affirming that the λόγος θεοῦ was an agent of both creation and revelation, roles which Philo attributes to the Logos. . . . It would appear, then, that Philo drew on a hellenistic Jewish tradition which asserted that by means of His Word, which was the same as His Wisdom, God created the world and revealed Himself to the prophets."[24]

Philo reveals some of the crucial OT intertexts for his Logos doctrine:[25]

> For this reason, whereas the voice of mortals is judged by hearing, the sacred oracles intimate that the words of God (τοὺς τοῦ θεοῦ λόγους) are seen as light is seen, for we are told that *all of the people saw the Voice* (Ex. 20:18), not that they heard it; for what was happening was not an impact of air made by the organs of mouth and tongue, but the radiating splendour of virtue indistinguishable from a fountain of reason. . . . But the voice of God which is not that of verbs and names yet seen by the eye of the soul, he (Moses) rightly introduces as "visible." (Philo, *Migr.* 47–48)

One of the fascinating and vitally important implications of this text is the close connection that it draws between the Logos, the Word, and light. This is an association that will immediately arouse associations with the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel, but in reality has much broader early Jewish contexts, as we shall see.

Further, it can hardly be doubted that for Philo the Logos is both a part of God and also a separate being, the Word that God created in the beginning in order to create everything else: the Word that both is God, therefore, and is with God. We find in Philo a passage that could just as easily have fit into Justin's *Apologies*:

> To His Word, His chief messenger, highest in age and honour, the Father of all has given the special prerogative, to stand on the border and separate the creature from the Creator. This same Word both pleads with the immortal as suppliant for afflicted mortality and acts as ambassador of the ruler to the subject. He glories in this prerogative and proudly describes it in these words "and I stood between the Lord and you" (Deut. v. 5), that is neither uncreated by God, nor created as you, but midway between the two extremes, a surety to both sides. (*Quis rerum divinarum heres sit* 205–206)[26]

[23]Hannah, *Michael*, 80.

[24]Ibid., 80–81.

[25]As pointed out by Maren R. Niehoff, "What is in a Name? Philo's Mystical Philosophy of Language," *JSQ* 2 (1995) 223.

[26]See also discussion in Hannah, *Michael*, 82–83.

Philo oscillates on the point of the ambiguity between separate existence of the Logos, God's Son,[27] and its total incorporation within the godhead. If Philo is not on the road to Damascus here, he is surely on a way that leads to Nicaea and the controversies over the second person of the Trinity.

It becomes, in the light of the centrality of such mediation by the Logos for Philo's theology, less and less plausible to speak of Philo as having been influenced by Middle Platonism. Instead, insofar as the Logos theology, the necessity for a mediator, is intrinsic to Middle Platonism, that form of "Hellenistic" philosophy may simply be the Judaism of Philo and his fellows. A "Hellenism" is, after all, by definition the creative synthesis of Greek and "Eastern" culture and thought, and "Philo's Logos, jointly formed by the study of Greek philosophy and of the Torah, was at once the written text, an eternal notion in the mind of the Creator and the organ of his work in time and space. Under this last aspect, it receives such epithets as Son, King, Priest and Only-Begotten; in short it becomes a person."[28] As eloquently described by Charles Harold Dodd as well, Philo's Logos is neither just the Wisdom, the חכמה of the Bible, nor is it quite the Stoic nor Platonic λόγος, nor yet just the divine Word, the דבר of the Hebrew, either, but some unique and new synthesis of all of these.[29] That synthesis is arguably the central theological notion of Middle Platonism itself. If the Logos as divine mediator, therefore, is the defining characteristic of Middle Platonism, then, not only may Philo's Judaism be Middle Platonism, Middle Platonism itself may be a form of Judaism and Christianity.[30]

Maren Niehoff emphasizes that for this aspect of his philosophy, Philo apparently did not have previous Greek sources to draw upon. For his notion of man as an Idea, Philo could draw upon his Alexandrian predecessor, Arius Didymus, but for the concept of language itself as an Idea, indeed perhaps as the Idea of Ideas, Philo had no known Platonist models.[31] This is, of course, of signal importance for the present investigation, as it suggests that we look in quite other directions for the Philonic intertexts for this conceptual world:

[27]E.g., in *De agricultura* 51.

[28]Edwards, "Justin's Logos," 263.

[29]Charles Harold Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960) 269–79.

[30]This idea was originally suggested to me in conversations with Virginia Burrus, but I take full responsibility for the formulation. As she points out, the parade example of a "pagan" Middle-Platonist turns out to be Numenius, a philosopher who, while nominally indeed not Jewish nor Christian, quotes quite a bit of Scripture for his purpose. See, inter alia, David Dawson, *Allegorical Readers and Cultural Revision in Ancient Alexandria* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992) 190–91; John Dillon, *The Middle Platonists: 80 B.C. to A.D. 220* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977) 378–79. I have perhaps misunderstood or exaggerated this point, which will need, in any case, further elaboration.

[31]Niehoff, "What's in a Name?" 226.

> Philo idealizes language more than man. For him, the ideal language does not at all belong to the realm of createdness. It rather seems to have preexisted with God Himself, thus entirely pertaining to the realm of the eternal, unchanging, most real and most true. In comparison to the ideal man, Divine language also plays a clearly more active and generative role. It is likely that both the enormous importance which Philo attributes to language and its active role as part of the Deity are ideas which are inspired by the natural assumption of God's speech-acts throughout the Biblical writings. The idea seems then to have been conceptualized in Plato's terms of ideal Forms.[32]

We find this active religious understanding of the Logos in another very evocative Philonic text:

> The Divine Word descends from the fountain of wisdom like a river to lave and water the olympian and celestial shoots and plants of virtue-loving souls which are as a garden. And this Holy Word *is separated into four heads,* which means that it is split up into the four virtues . . . . It is this Word which one of Moses' company compared to a river, when he said in the Psalms: *the river of God is full of water* (Ps 65:10); where surely it were absurd to use that word literally with reference to rivers of the earth. Instead, as it seems, he represents the Divine Word as full of the stream of wisdom, with no part empty or devoid of itself . . . inundated through and through and lifted up on high by the continuity and unbroken sequence from that everflowing fountain (*Somn.* 2.242–45)[33]

Philo's Logos seems, therefore, a close congener of the Logos theology that we find among almost all ante-Nicene Christian writers, and which would appear, therefore, to have a "Jewish" Beginning.

■ The *Memra*

Were we to find such notions among non-Christian Jews in Philo alone, we could regard him, as he often is regarded, as a sport, a mutant, or even a voice crying in the wilderness. However, there were other Jews, and, moreover, not only Greek-speaking ones, who manifested a version of Logos theology. Notions of the second god as personified word or wisdom of God were present among Semitic-speaking Jews as well. This point is important because it further disturbs the dichotomies that have been promulgated between Hellenistic and Rabbinic (by which is usually meant "authentic," "really real") Judaisms.[34] The leading candidate for the Semitic Logos

[32]Ibid., 226.

[33]Ibid., 230.

[34]For Goodenough, writing in 1923, there are "Judaism proper" and "Hellenistic Judaism," and he claims that it is the latter which provides Justin's theology with its theoretical base

is, of course, "The *Memra*" of God, as it appears in the para-rabbinic Aramaic translations[35] of the Bible in textual contexts that are frequently identical to ones where

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(Goodenough, *The Theology of Justin Martyr*, 33). Although in the intervening decades such notions have loosened up considerably, they are by no means gone from the world.

[35]That is, in the ancient Palestinian and Babylonian synagogues. They are para-rabbinic in that as synagogue products they frequently represent religious ideas and practices parallel in time to (and from the same geographical space as) but not by any means identical to those of the "official" rabbinic Judaism represented in the rabbinic literature. Some of the Targums, notably Targum Onkelos and the targum known as Pseudo-Jonathan, have been modified somewhat to make them better fit rabbinic ideologies and interpretations. The principle that whatever disagrees with the Mishna must be pre-Mishnaic can no longer be maintained, given what we think now about Jewish religious diversity within the rabbinic period and the difficulties of the Rabbis in gaining hegemony over the Synagogue and its liturgy; see, inter alia, Richard S. Sarason, "On the Use of Method in the Modern Study of Jewish Liturgy," in *Approaches to Ancient Judaism: Theory and Practice* (ed. W.S. Green; Missoula: Scholars Press, 1978) 146; and Joseph Heinemann, *Prayer in the Talmud: Forms and Patterns* (Studia Judaica; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1977) 7. In truth, Heinemann's form-criticism seems to me rather confusing in that he blurs heavily the distinction between the distinct topoi of Study House and Synagogue together with their associated *Gattungen*. Thus, for him, Targum, a Synagogue *Gattung* par excellence, belongs to the Study House (Heinemann, *Prayer*, 265)! I find his reasoning and argument, therefore, very difficult to follow. Much clearer and more convincing are Lee I. Levine, "The Sages and the Synagogue in Late Antiquity: The Evidence of the Galilee," in *The Galilee in Late Antiquity* (ed. Lee I. Levine; New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1992) 201–24; and Cynthia Baker, "Neighbor at the Door or Enemy at the Gate? Notes Toward a Rabbinic Topography of Self and Other" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion, New Orleans, 1996). For a related argument for non-rabbinic religious traditions alongside those of the Rabbis (and not to be distinguished from it in terms of class) see Segal, *Powers*, 67 on Metatron and the late-ancient text known as "The Visions of Ezekiel." In this text, a secondary divine figure is cheerfully accepted on the grounds of Daniel 7:9 and called the "youth" (נער), known by other Jews (e.g., the fourth evangelist) as the "son of man"! Although Scholem famously interpreted "youth" here as "servant," there is little warrant for this interpretation, as argued by David J. Halperin, "A Sexual Image in Hekhalot Rabbati and Its Implications," *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 6, 1–2 (1987) 125. I am convinced that he is called the "youth," i.e., the "Son of Man," in contrast to the "Ancient of Days." There is increasing evidence from all sides that the religion of the late ancient Palestinian countryside (and even well into the Byzantine period) was by no means identical with that projected by the Rabbis. On this point, see also Elchanan Reiner, "From Joshua to Jesus: The Transformation of a Biblical Story to a Local Myth: A Chapter in the Religious Life of the Galilean Jew," in *Sharing the Sacred: Religious Contacts and Conflicts in the Holy Land: First–Fifteenth CE* (ed. Guy Stroumsa and Arieh Kofsky; Jerusalem: Yad Ben Zvi, 1998) 224–25, where it is argued, inter alia, that

> it will be necessary to distinguish between the normative religious world, as formulated in talmudic literature, and the religious world represented by those lists [of Jewish holy places] and the associated literature. We may possibly have to acknowledge the existence of a Galilean community whose religious milieu differs from that presently known.

Surprisingly (or not so by now), the life of this "religious world" represented a set of identity formations (for narrative traditions) in which "Judaism" and "Christianity" were not nearly so clearly distinct as they are in the normative texts. See finally Hasan-Rokem, "Narratives in Dialogue."

the Logos hermeneutic has its home among Jews who speak Greek.[36]

"The *Memra* has a place above the angels as that agent of the Deity who sustains the course of nature and personifies the Law."[37] This position has been well established among historians of Christianity since the late nineteenth century. Alfred Edersheim saw the *Memra* as referring to God's self-revelation. As Robert Hayward says of Edersheim: "He also made a distinction between God and the *Memra*. Noting that Rabbinic theology has not preserved for us the doctrine of distinct persons in the Godhead, he remarks: 'And yet, if words have any meaning, the *Memra* is a hypostasis.' "[38] With this comment, Edersheim is clearly implying the existence of non-rabbinic forms of Judaism that were extant and vital within the rabbinic period alongside the rabbinic religion itself. Although the official rabbinic theology suppressed all talk of the *Memra* or Logos by naming it the heresy of "Two Powers in Heaven," both before the Rabbis and contemporaneously with them there was a multitude of Jews, in both Palestine and the Diaspora, who held onto this version of monotheistic theology.[39] If we accept Edersheim's view, the *Memra* is related to the Logos of Logos theology in its various Christian manifestations.

There have been obstacles to seeing the connections between the *Memra* and the Logos, however. Among Jewish scholars, as Hayward has put it, "since the time of Maimonides, it had been the custom to understand *Memra*, along with certain other Targumic terms like *Shekhinta'* [*sic*] (Presence) and *Yeqara'* [*sic*] (Glory), as a means of avoiding anthropomorphisms in speaking of God, and thus defending a notion of his incorporeality. Nahmanides, however, disagreed with Maimonides on this issue, although he held that the words had a secret and mystical meaning which would be revealed only to those versed in the *Kabbalah*. Nonetheless, the idea that *Memra* was simply a means of speaking about God in a reverent manner befitting His omnipotence and otherness was not unknown from the time of the Middle Ages onwards."[40] The consensus of scholarship since the 1920s has been like Maimonides's view. Thus, "Die Folgerung, die sich aus vorstehenden Darlegungen in Bezug aus

[36]The Hebrew behind the Aramaic *Memra* is apparently *ʾimra*, its virtual etymological equivalent, as found, in synonymous parallelism with *dabar* and *Torah* in Ps 119. In that psalm, the LXX translates *ʾimra* as λόγος and sometimes νόμος.

[37]Edwards, "Justin's Logos," 263.

[38]Robert Hayward, *Divine Name and Presence: The Memra* (Oxford Centre for Postgraduate Hebrew Studies; Totowa, N.J.: Allanheld, Osmun, 1981) 3.

[39]I shall be defending this argument in a companion piece to this one, tentatively entitled: "The Heresy of Rabbi Akiva: Two Powers in the House of Study."

[40]Hayward, *Memra*, 1. See Vinzenz Hamp, *Der Begriff "Wort" in den aramäischen Bibelübersetzungen: ein exegetischer Beitrag zur Hypostasen-Frage und zur Geschichte der Logos-Spekulationen* (München: Neuer Filser-verlag, 1938). For a good and judicious discussion of the three Aramaic terms in question, see Arnold Maria Goldberg, *Untersuchungen über die Vorstellung von der Schekhinah in der frühen rabbinischen Literatur: Talmud und Midrasch* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1969) 1–12.

den Johannischen Logos ergibt, kann nicht zweifelhaft sein: ist der Ausdruck '*Memra* Adonais' ein inhaltsloser, rein formelhafter Ersatz für das Tetragram gewesen. . . ."[41] Here is Raymond Brown representing the standard view: "Targum Onkelos speaks of the *Memra* of Yahweh. This is not a personification, but the use of *Memra* serves as a buffer for divine transcendence."[42]

It seems not to have occurred to any who hold this view that it is fundamentally incoherent and self-contradictory. Surely, this position collapses logically upon itself, for if the *Memra* is just a name that simply enables avoiding asserting that God himself has created, appeared, supported, saved, and thus preserves his absolute transcendence, then who, after all, *did* the actual creating, appearing, supporting, saving? Either God himself, in which case, one has hardly "protected" him from contact with the material world, or there is some other divine entity, in which case, the *Memra* is not just a name. Indeed, as pointed out by Burton Mack, the very purpose for which Sophia/Logos developed within Judaism was precisely to enable "a theology of the transcendence of God."[43] The currently accepted and dominant view ascribes to the use of the *Memra* only the counterfeit coinage of a linguistic simulation of a theology of the transcendence of God, without the theology itself. Rather than assuming that the usage is meaningless, it seems superior on general hermeneutic grounds to assume that it means something. It follows then that the strongest reading of the *Memra* is that it is not a mere name, but an actual divine entity, or mediator.[44]

An additional obstacle in the way of seeing connections between Logos and *Memra* has been in the way that the problem has been posed, namely, as put by

[41]Hermann Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* (München: C. H. Beck, 1924) 333. So thoroughly had I been socialized into the traditional "Jewish" view here that I did not perceive any connection between the Logos and the Memra until Virginia Burrus sent me to the crucial Edwards, "Justin's Logos."

[42]Brown, *John*, 1:524.

[43]Burton L. Mack, *Logos und Sophia: Untersuchungen zur Weisheitstheologie im Hellenistischen Judentum* (SUNT; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1973) 6. Similarly, James D. G. Dunn argues that the purpose of Sophia is to impart "God's active concern in creation, revelation and redemption, while at the same time protecting his holy transcendence and wholly otherness" (*Christology in the Making: A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980] 176).

[44]The argument that the Targums have sometimes "God" and sometimes the "*Memra*" in the same contexts is hardly decisive, since the ambiguity between God and the Logos is to be found wherever Logos theology is to be found, *pace* Martin McNamara, "Logos of the Fourth Gospel and *Memra* of the Palestinian Targum," *ExpTim* 79 (1968) 115. In later Jewish usage, one says "The Name" instead of actually citing any divine name. Although this usage has been compared to the use of the *Memra* in the Targums, they are not at all comparable. The later practice is a simple linguistic substitution to avoid profaning the Holy Name by pronouncing it, which the phrase *Memra H'* obviously does not accomplish. (I am using "H' " to represent the Hebrew *nomen sacrum*.)

Martin McNamara, as an issue regarding whether or not the "targumic expression" is "a true preparation for the rich Johannine doctrine of the Logos." In that case, "the doctrine as well as the term used by John would have been prepared in the synagogue theology." As an alternative to the view that John's doctrine "had been prepared in the synagogue," a view that had been rejected by all scholars according to McNamara, "many scholars have come to see the preparation for the doctrine of John in the Wisdom literature of the Old Testament, and for the term he uses in the creative word (in Hebrew: *dabar*) of God."

McNamara himself draws a distinction between the doctrine and the words used to express it: "His teaching on the nature of the Logos John got from the revelation of the New Testament. The source from which he drew the words that express this new doctrine is then the point at issue."[45] Those of us who are more skeptical about revelation may be more skeptical as well about the notion of an idea without a word that then finds its word elsewhere, indeed from the revelation of a canon that was not to come into existence for centuries. Clearly, the apologetic desire to find absolute uniqueness in this important moment in Christian doctrine and the consequent compliance with a different sort of Jewish apologetic of its own has misdirected the inquiry.[46]

In contrast, after his discovery of the first complete manuscript of the Palestinian Targum,[47] and slightly before McNamara, Alejandro Díez Macho had argued for the close connection of the *Memra* so widely occurring in this text with the Logos of the Fourth Gospel.[48] In all of the Palestinian Aramaic translations of the Bible, the term *Memra*—as a translation of various terms which in the Hebrew either simply mean God or are names of God—is legion and theologically highly significant, because these usages parallel nearly exactly the functions of the Logos, the *deuteros theos* in Logos theology.

We find the *Memra* working as the Logos works in the following ways:

Creating: Gen 1:3: "And the *Memra* of H' said Let there be light and there was Light by his *Memra*." In all of the following verses, it is the *Memra* that performs all of the creative actions.[49]

Speaking to humans: Gen 3:8 ff: "And they heard the voice of the *Memra* of H'. . . . And the *Memra* of H' called out to the Man."[50]

[45]All quotes in this and the previous paragraph are from McNamara, "Logos," 115.

[46]On this point in general, see Jonathan Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity* (Chicago Studies in the History of Judaism; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

[47]Alejandro Díez Macho, *Neophyti 1, Targum Palestinense ms. de la Biblioteca Vaticana* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1968).

[48]Alejandro Díez Macho, "El Logos y el Espíritu Santo," *Atlántida* 1 (1963) 381–96.

[49]Michael L. Klein, ed. and trans., *The Fragment-Targums of the Pentateuch according to Their Extant Sources* (2 vols.; AnBib; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1980) 1:43.

[50]Klein, *Fragment-Targums*, 1:45–46.

Revealing himself: Gen 18:1: "And was revealed to him the *Memra* of H'."

Punishing the wicked: Gen 19:24 "And the *Memra* of H' rained down on Sodom and Gomorrah."[51]

Saving: Exod 17:21: "And the *Memra* of H' was leading them during the day in a pillar of cloud."[52]

Redeeming: Deut 32:39: "When the Memra of H' shall be revealed to redeem his people."

These examples lead inductively to the conclusion that the *Memra* performs many, if not all, of the functions of the Logos of Christian Logos theology (as well as of Wisdom),[53] and an *a priori* case can be made, therefore, for some kind of connection between these two, after all, etymologically cognate entities in non-rabbinic Judaism.

[51]Ibid., 1:53.

[52]Ibid., 1:74. Cf. Philo, *Her*. 205, in which the Logos is identified as this very angel.

[53]Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, 152. This vitiates somewhat Hurtado's point that the different functions, "creation, redemption, revelation," are assigned to different quasi-divine figures in "Judaism," while all are assigned to one in "Christianity," thus marking a significant difference (Hurtado, *One God*, 21). Of course, one could argue that the Memra is a post-Christian development, not an impossible suggestion, and one that would make the point of continued Jewish/Christian closeness all the more eloquently. While in general I find Hurtado's argument bracing and important, his exclusive reliance on only one criterion, worship, as determining the divine nature of a given intermediary seems to me overly narrow and rigid. There may be no gainsaying his demonstration, I think, that worship of the *incarnate* Logos, is a novum, a "mutation" as he styles it, introduced by Jesus-people, but the *belief* in an intermediary, a *deuteros theos*, was common to them and other Jews. To Hurtado's one-dimensional notion of what constitutes a divine being, contrast Daniel Abrams: "When is an attribute a literary means of describing divine activity, and when is it personified as a hypostatic element, receiving an identity of its own, while nevertheless partaking in the divine ontology? The latter appears to be the case when the physical manifestation of God is not excluded from the divine being" ("The Boundaries of Divine Ontology: The Inclusion and Exclusion of Meṭaṭron in the Godhead," *HTR* 87 [1994] 292). On this criterion, as I have indicated, many non-Christian Jews did indeed believe in second divinities or second divine beings.

Moreover, there is powerful evidence that in quite early (but post-Christian) mystical prayer even among rabbinic circles, it was possible to pray to both "The Lord of All" and the "Creator of Bereʾshit," without this having, seemingly, any "gnostic" meanings. Idel uses the term "binitarian" for this form of Jewish prayer in its early medieval manifestations and explicitly rejects the terminology of "gnosis" that had appeared in earlier scholarly writings (Moshe Idel, "Prayer in Provencal Kabbalah" [in Hebrew] *Tarbiẓ* 62 [1993] 269). This form of Jewish prayer may be as early as the late second century, and at the latest is from the fourth–fifth centuries. (For discussion of dating as well as references to earlier literature, see Michael D. Swartz, "*Alay Le-Shabbeaḥ*: a Liturgical Prayer in *Maʿaśeh Merkabah*," *JQR* 87 [1986–87] 186 n. 21). Scholem dated the prayer very early (Gershom Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism and Talmudic Tradition* [2d ed.; New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1965] 27). It is thus at least contemporary with the later targumic texts. It becomes harder and harder to see binitarian worship as the distinguishing feature between "Judaism" and "Christianity." As Idel emphasizes, this binitarian prayer was found in abso-

In the Targumim we can see, or at any rate, construct a picture of how the *Memra* has also come into being in the exegesis of Gen 1:3. Exod 3:12–14 (the theophany of the burning bush) and its targumic expositions are key texts.[54] In the first of these verses, in answer to Moses's apprehension that he will not be sufficient to go to Pharaoh to bring out the Israelites, God answers: "I [אהיה] will be with you." According to the Palestinian Targum, preserved in MS Neofiti 1, the Aramaic here reads: "I, My *Memra*, will be with you."[55] The other targumim maintain this interpretation but add the element of the *Memra* as supporter, thus, "And he said: Because my *Memra* will be for your support."[56] The Hebrew here reads that Moses, having asked God his name so that he may say in whose name it is that he comes, receives the famous reply: "And God said to Moses: I am that I am,[57] and he said: Thus shall you say unto them, I am has sent me to you" (Exod 3:14).

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lutely central early medieval rabbinic writers, of whom it is almost impossible to imagine that they "invented" a binitarian worship form that they had not received as a tradition. Their binitarian interpretation of the late ancient prayer may be taken, therefore, as highly plausible if not definitive. For another remnant of late ancient Jewish prayer directed to a secondary divine being of one sort or another, see Daniel Abrams, "From Divine Shape to Angelic Being: The Career of Akatriel in Jewish Literature," *JR* (1996) 43–63; and Daniel Abrams, "The Dimensions of the Creator—Contradiction or Paradox?: Corruptions and Accretions to the Manuscript Witnesses," *Kabbalah: Journal for the Study of Jewish Mystical Texts* 5 (2000) 35–53. Once more, it could be said with hardly any exaggeration that the various attempts in medieval Jewish exegesis to explain these texts could be mapped onto the varieties of late ancient christologies, from docetism to homoianism. On the other hand, the incarnation of the Logos in Jesus' flesh was much more of a "mutation" than was worship of the Logos or Demiurge. What is fascinating is that this very prayer to a binitarian God includes an explicit anti-Jesus-worship moment: "They pray to vanity and emptiness, and bow down to a God who cannot save [=לאל לא יושיע]." The last three words are, in my opinion, an ironic pun on the name of Jesus, *Soter*. Israel M. Ta-Shma ("The Origin and Place of *ʿAleinu le-Shabbeaḥ* in the Daily Prayerbook: *Seder Ha-MaʿAmadot* and Its Relation to the Conclusion of the Daily Service" [in Hebrew], in *The Frank Talmage Memorial Volume* [ed. Barry Walfish; vol. 1; Haifa: University of Haifa Press, 1993] 90) cites a medieval Ashkenazic expanded version of the prayer that explicitly indicates that "they" worship a God who is only "flesh and blood." The insinuation is that the *Logos Asarkos* is kosher for Jewish worship but not the *Logos Ensarkos*!

The question of "Meṭaṭron and Jesus" is also treated by Abrams, "Meṭaṭron," 316–21.

[54]I am in agreement with the argument of Hayward, *Memra*, 16–20, that this is a key targumic textual nexus for understanding the *Memra*, although I disagree with various points in his interpretation. Hayward, needless to say, is not concerned there with the Johannine parallel.

[55]Díez Macho, *Neophyti 1*, ad loc.

[56]The association of *Memra* with supporting, as well as redeeming and revealing, is almost commonplace in the Targums, as we have seen above.

[57]For reasons of his own, Hayward translates here "I AM THERE," which does not seem warranted or necessary to me.

On this verse the Palestinian Targum[58] translates: "And the *Memra* of H' said to Moses: He who said [אמר] to the world from the beginning, 'Be there,' and it was there, and who is to say [יאמר] to it 'Be there,' and it will be there; and he said, Thus shall you say to the Israelites, He has sent me to you."[59] In other words, the declaration "I AM" has been glossed in the Targums by a reference to Genesis 1's "Let there be" and thus to the Word by which God brought the universe into being. In the verse following this one, as we have just seen above, this name for God—"He who said to the world 'Be there' "—has become transformed into a divine being in its own right, the very word that was said, separate from but homoousios with God: "I, My *Memra*, will be with you: I, My *Memra*, will be a support for you." From here we see how this *Memra*, Logos, is that which is revealed to Moses in the declaration I AM and which provides support for him, redeems the Israelites, and so forth. In the Targum, as in the Logos theology, this word has actually been hypostasized.[60] In other words, this targumic midrash provides us with an actual point of origin for the term *Memra* as derived from an interpretation of Gen 1:3. One could almost say that "I am" is a name for the *Memra* from this targumic text.

The conclusive evidence for the connection of the targumic *Memra* and the Logos of John has been adduced by Martin McNamara himself in the guise of the Palestinian Targumic poetic homily on the "Four Nights." Most immediately relevant here is the "first night," the night of creation:

> Four nights are written in the Book of Memories: The first night: when the Lord was revealed above the world to create it. The world was unformed and void and darkness was spread over the surface of the deep; AND THROUGH HIS *MEMRA* THERE WAS LIGHT AND ILLUMINATION, and he called it the first night.[61]

This text appears in various witnesses to the Palestinian Targum, so it cannot be taken as a later "Christianizing" interpolation into the text. McNamara's conclusion that this text represents a cognate to the first verses of the Johannine Prologue, with their association of Logos, the Word, and light, is therefore compelling, although, as we shall see below, the Prologue shows other "midrashic" connections as well: "It is legitimate, then, to presume that the author of the Fourth Gospel heard read in the synagogue that, at the very beginning of time, at the creation of the universe ('the first night'), there was an all-pervading dark-

[58]Both in the MS known as the Fragment Targum and in the Geniza Fragments.

[59]Klein, *Fragment-Targums*, 1:164.

[60]It is fascinating that in the binitarian theology of later medieval Kabbalism, the first "I am" is taken to refer to the Demiurge and the second to Wisdom! (Idel, "Prayer in Provencal Kabbalah," 274–75).

[61]Klein, *Fragment-Targums*, 2:47.

ness. There was also God, or 'the Word of the Lord.' This Word of the Lord was the light and it shone."[62] As McNamara shows, the midrash of the "four nights," from which this quotation about the night of creation is taken, culminates in the night of the Messiah, drawing even closer the connections between the religious tradition of the synagogues as manifested in the Targums and that of the fourth evangelist. Moreover, the midrash of the "four nights" is almost beyond a doubt a fragment of Paschal liturgy, suggesting even more palpably its appropriateness as intertext for a Gospel.[63]

The Gospel of John, according to this view, when taken together with Philo and with the Targum, provides further important evidence for Logos theology, used here as a general term for various closely related binitarian theologies, as the religious Koine of Jews in Palestine and the Diaspora.[64] To identify the Gospel of John as representative of a Jewish theological Koine is in itself to challenge longstanding paradigms, according to which the Fourth Gospel virtually enacts the separation of Christianity from Judaism via its inscription of Logos theology. As

[62]McNamara, "Logos," 116.

[63]See now Roger Le Déaut, *La Nuit Pascale: Essai sur la signification de la Pâque juive à partir du Targum d'Exode XII 42* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1980). Note that Brown, *John*, 1:523, has shown that some of the citations of Torah in the Fourth Gospel are neither from the Hebrew nor from the Septuagint but from the targumic tradition.

[64]Hurtado, *One God*, 17. I would directly disagree with Hurtado's assumption that "Although we do not actually have first-century Jewish documents that tell us directly what Jewish leaders thought of Christian devotion, there seems to be every reason to assume that the attitude was very much like the one reflected in slightly later Jewish sources, which apparently rejected cultic devotion to Jesus as constituting an example of the worship of 'two powers in heaven,' that is, the worship of two gods" (Hurtado, *One God*, 2). This statement reveals the following assumptions, none of which I share. First, that there were Jewish leaders in the first century who are necessarily not Christian. Second, that the notion of a heresy of "two powers in heaven" can already be assumed from that time. Third, that it was worship of two gods (rather than binitarianism in general) that was identified with this so-called heresy. The primary gap between us seems to be in what each of is willing to call "Jewish" or "Christian," or indeed the applicability of that distinction at all in the first or even second centuries. Hurtado, moreover, seems inclined to see the major development between the first and subsequent centuries as a change in the nature of "heresy" rather than in a change in the nature of Jewish heresiology. Cf. p. 19, where he writes that "in the surviving literature of the pre-Christian period, however, it is not clear that any of the chief figures were seen as sharing the unique veneration due to God alone or that Jewish monotheism was fundamentally modified by the interest shown in these figures." But, once again, we find here a reification of "Jewish monotheism" as a real entity which is either modified or not, but not as a construction that might very well have come into being through the exclusion of certain traditional beliefs, namely the elaboration of a "two powers" heresiology—not the invention of a "two powers" heresy. For a succinct indication of the ways that Hurtado's and my positions are direct contradictories, see Hurtado, *One God*, 37. Hurtado's exclusive use of liturgy, worship, as a taxon for distinguishing binitarianism seems to me overdrawn. Belief in intermediaries in the performance of God's functions can also be binitarian in its ethos. It is important to remember

Dunn has put it, "Only in the Fourth Gospel do we find claims on the lips of Jesus which could be understood as subversive of the unity of God,"[65] and, therefore, for Dunn, a subversion of "Judaism" and a "parting of the ways." If there is a moment in the Gospel in which that shift towards a break takes place (and, as Dunn himself realizes better than most critics, such a shift is *not* the break itself), then specifying the exact location is crucial to the historiography of Judeo-Christianity. The Prologue is the best place to start.

Many scholars who deny any connection of the *Memra* with the Logos insist instead that the only relevant background for the Logos is the Wisdom of the Bible and later Jewish literature. However, as Gary Anderson points out, the Targum also reveals close connections between the *Memra* and the figure of Wisdom. Once we understand how Logos, *Memra*, and Wisdom were all related in the thought world that produced these texts, we are prepared to locate the role these concepts jointly play in the beginning of "Christianity's" origins, its articulation of its differences from "Judaism" in the Prologue to John. We "can presume that *ḥokmâ* and *logos* are related concepts," and in that case, "the understanding of *bĕrēʾšît* in *Tg. Neofiti* would provide a remarkable parallel to John 1:1."[66]

In light of this hypothesized close relationship between Palestinian *Memra* and Logos, I would like to propose that what marks the Fourth Gospel as a new departure in the history of Judaism is not to be found in its Logos theology at all but in its incarnational Christology, and that that very historical departure, or rather advent, is iconically symbolized in the narrative itself. When the text announces in v. 14 that "the Word became flesh," that announcement is an iconic representation of the moment that the Christian narrative begins to diverge from the Jewish Koine and form its own nascent Christian kerygma.

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that binitarian is not the opposite of monotheistic, unless one makes it to be so, as the Rabbis seem to have done. So any evidence for Jewish binitarianism does not constitute a "weakening" of pure monotheism, any more than Christian trinitarianism does, except from the point of view of Modalists such as rabbinic Jews, who regard it as heresy, of course.

[65]Dunn, *Partings*, 182.

[66]Gary Anderson, "The Interpretation of Genesis 1:1 in the Targums," *CBQ* 52 (1990) 28. Anderson notes that in both the "Targum" in John and in the Palestinian Targum, the term *bĕreʾšît* is, in effect, translated twice, once as "In the beginning" and once as "by means of Wisdom/the Word," and, moreover, in both, "preexistence and superintendence were inextricable concepts." The hermeneutical move would be presumably similar to the one made in *Bereʾshit Rabbah*, where we read: "The Holy Blessed One looked into the Torah, and created the world, as the Torah says, 'In the Beginning God created,' and 'Beginning' can mean nothing but Torah, just as it is said, 'H' begat me/made me/acquired me at the Beginning of his way' " (ed. Jehuda Theodor and Hanoch Albeck; *Bereʾshit Rabbah* [Jerusalem: Wahrmann, 1965]). The difference in the role between the Logos and the Torah is of central importance: the Logos is an actual, personified agent, while for the Rabbis, Wisdom has been captured in a Book, and there is only one agent, but the hermeneutical move that lies behind this midrash and behind the opening verse of the Fourth Gospel is surely the same.

■ The Logos of the Gospel: In Memory of Hymn

> "To solve our difficulties by recourse to the knife is to violate the objectivity which should characterize our study." (W. D. Davies)

> "Admittedly the origin of this wisdom speculation is not yet completely clear. But unquestionably the origin was not Jewish." (Rudolf Bultmann)[67]

J. Rendell Harris was perhaps the first scholar who noted the close connections of the Prologue with certain themes of early and later Jewish Wisdom literature.[68] He compared the Prologue to such biblical and apocryphal texts as Prov 8:22–31, Sirach 24, the Wisdom of Solomon, and Bar 3:37–4:1, and argued that it belonged to the same genre. These texts do indeed provide us with impressive thematic parallels, as well as parallel metaphoric language to the Johannine Prologue, and certainly suggest a common thought-world out of which the Evangelist or his amanuensis is writing.

In 1974 Eldon J. Epp took these parallels to what seemed then their logical conclusion: "The clear answer (developed by J. Rendell Harris in 1917) is that a model [for the Prologue] was provided by the *Wisdom hymns* of the OT and the Apocrypha. That is, the Johannine hymn to the Logos was inspired, in content, and in form, generally at least, by the hymns about or by personified Wisdom, such as those in Prov 8:1–36; Job 28:12–28; Sir 24:1–34; Bar 3:9–4:4; and Wis 7:22–10:21."[69] Epp has, to be sure, clearly seen the close connections in theme and metaphor between the Prologue and these Wisdom hymns. Epp's argument, however, that the Prologue to the Fourth Gospel is directly modeled on the Wisdom hymns of the OT and Apocrypha is dependent on the unexamined assumption that formally the John text is a hymn to Wisdom or to the Logos.

In spite of Epp's stipulation that "this conclusion [that the Prologue is a hymn to the Logos] is widely held and, for our purpose, is in no need of further discussion,"[70] it is actually very much in need of further discussion. Harris's argument as taken up by Epp and more recently by other scholars[71] has had the enormous virtue of empha-

[67]Bultmann, "History of Religions," 40.

[68]J. Rendell Harris, *The Origin of the Prologue to St. John's Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1917). Bultmann himself explicitly dismissed Harris's position (Bultmann, *John*, 23 n. 1).

[69]Eldon Jay Epp, "Wisdom, Torah, Word: The Johannine Prologue and the Purpose of the Fourth Gospel," in *Current Issues in Biblical and Patristic Interpretation: Studies in Honor of Merrill C. Tenney Presented by his Former Students* (ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1974) 130.

[70]Epp, "Wisdom," 130.

[71]Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Jesus: Miriam's Child, Sophia's Prophet: Critical Issues in Feminist Christology* (New York: Continuum, 1994); Martin Scott, *Sophia and the Johannine Jesus* (JSNTSup; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992) as well as others.

sizing that we did not have to look outside of the Judaic world for the models or sources of the alleged Wisdom Hymn that constitutes the Prologue, even if the Judaic world that he considered was centuries earlier than the time of the Evangelist. On the other hand, in its current form, it fails to account adequately for the shift from Wisdom, Sophia, חכמה, in the original models to the Logos of the Fourth Gospel.[72] A rereading of the Prologue to John constructed of tesserae from current interpretations may help solve this problem as well as leading to a new mosaic picture of the "Jewishness" of John and thus of more of early Christianity.

Epp's assumption of a consensus that the text is a hymn may seem well-founded. For much of this century the Prologue to the Fourth Gospel has been identified as a hymn. Such important commentators as Haenchen simply assume its validity.[73] Schnackenburg writes, "The conviction has prevailed in recent research that the prologue is based on a song or hymn which was taken up by the evangelist and used for the beginning of his Gospel. Discussion is confined to asking what verses belonged to this poem, what was its original form, where it originated, and what occasioned it."[74] In one of the most recent major commentaries on the Fourth Gospel, we find G. R. Beasley-Murray joining the chorus: "The suggestion of an Aramaic original, while accepted by Bultmann, has been widely rejected, but the basic idea of a poem concerning the Logos has found general acceptance."[75] There are, of course, some important dissenters (notably British ones). None less than C. K. Barrett writes: "The Prologue, then, stands before us as a prose introduction which has not been submitted to interpolation and was specially written (it must be supposed) to introduce the gospel."[76] In a similar vein write F. F. Bruce[77] and Dodd.[78]

[72]In a recent article Thomas H. Tobin has written, "the various attributes and activities ascribed to wisdom in Jewish wisdom literature are ascribed to the *Logos* in the hymn in the Prologue. Yet significant elements in the hymn cannot be explained simply on the basis of texts from Jewish wisdom literature. The first of these elements is the central concept of the hymn itself, that is, the *Logos*. In Jewish wisdom literature the figure of Wisdom (*Ḥokmâ, Sophia*) was never displaced by the *Logos* as it was in the hymn of the Prologue" ("The Prologue of John and Hellenistic Jewish Speculation," *CBQ* 52 [1990] 254).

[73]Ernst Haenchen, *John: A Commentary on the Gospel of John* (ed. and trans. Robert Walter Funk; 2 vols.; Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984) 1:101.

[74]Schnackenburg, *John*, 224–25.

[75]George Raymond Beasley-Murray, *John* (WBC; Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1987) 3.

[76]Barrett, *John*, 126–27.

[77]F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1983) 28.

[78]Dodd, *Interpretation*, 272, and see further references below. My interpretation of this point, in the end, seems closest to that of Dodd. I hope here to have provided sufficient considerations to bolster this line of thought. See C. H. Giblin, "Two Complementary Literary Structures in John 1:1–18," *JBL* 104 (1985) 87–103 for the main formal literary argument against reading the Prologue as a hymn.

I will throw my lot in here with the minority.[79] What seems to be at stake in this debate is the question of the *Gattung* or form of this alleged hymn. It is of importance in terms of a criticism that locates particular forms in particular living religious situations. In my view, the *Sitz im Leben* of the Prologue is a homiletical or preaching situation, and not one of praise or adoration. It is, moreover, a homiletic retelling of the beginning of Genesis, and therefore interpretative and narratival in its genre and not hymnic and cyclical, that is, liturgical.

Acknowledging this point shifts the interpretation of crucial moments in the Prologue itself and reorients our understanding of its place in the literary and theological scheme of the Gospel as a whole. Since the primary thrust of much, if not most, interpretation of the Fourth Gospel has been to insist in one way or another that its Logos theology is uniquely Christian (that is, not Jewish), interpreters taking the Prologue as a hymn have mostly read it as a hymn to Jesus, that is to the Logos Incarnate. Even a commentator such as Haenchen, who follows in the tradition of understanding that the "original" hymn did not incorporate a reference to the Incarnate Logos before v. 14, remains convinced that "the redactor did not understand that the activity of the pre-incarnate Logos was further described in vv. 9–11, but now made these verses refer to the Logos become flesh, too."[80] Haenchen, however, also reveals the flaw in this interpretation in the very next sentence: "The insertion does not suit the context: the Logos incarnate, the Galilean Jesus, did not experience only rejection."[81]

This general line of interpretation, which can be conveniently found by the English reader in Raymond Brown's seminal commentary, has led to needless confusion, unclarity, and "recourse to the knife." In assuming the recursive structures of the hymn, commentators have been free to assume that the Incarnation is referred to in the text long before v. 14 with its majestic: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." Thus an interpreter such as Serafin de Ausejo,[82] who strongly reads the Prologue as belonging to a *Christian* genre of hymns to Jesus, reads the entire Prologue as referring to the *Logos Ensarkos*, a reading that completely cuts this text off from any Jewish roots whatsoever, and Brown allows that this interpretation might be correct.[83]

[79]See also the discussion in Morna D. Hooker, "John the Baptist and the Johannine Prologue," *NTS* 16 (1969) 354–58.

[80]Haenchen, *John*, 1:128.

[81]My reading of the Prologue remains, nevertheless, closest in some ways to that of Haenchen, *John*, 1:127, who comes closest, I think, as well to the spirit of my proposal for the relation of the "Jewish" to the new "Christian" kerygma in the text. I hope, however, to obviate recourse to the knife in order to defend that reading.

[82]Serafin de Ausejo, "¿Es un himno a Cristo el prólogo de San Juan?" *EstBib* 15 (1956) 223–77, 381–427.

[83]Brown, *John*, 1:23.

Brown himself prefers, however, to read the first five verses of the Prologue in a fashion quite similar to the interpretation that I am offering. The big difference comes at v. 10 and following, where Brown argues not unlike Haenchen: "The third strophe of the original hymn seems to deal with the Word incarnate in the ministry of Jesus." Brown believes that the decisive evidence for this interpretation is to be found in vv. 12–13: "But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God." As Brown argues, "It seems incredible that in a hymn coming out of Johannine circles the ability to become a child of God would have been explained in another way than in terms of having been begotten from above by the spirit of Jesus."[84] It is this incredibility, this stone that the builders have scorned, that I will make the keystone of my interpretation, for I believe, contra Brown, that until v. 14 what we have before us is a piece of perfectly unexceptional non-Christian Jewish thought that has been seamlessly woven into the Christological narrative of the Johannine community.[85]

A strictly chronological narrative interpretation of the text rather than a lyrical, hymnic one makes for better reading. Among the standard commentators on the Gospel, I have found this view clearly articulated only by Dodd: "The transition from the cosmical Logos to the Logos incarnate is assisted if we take the propositions in i. 9–13 to refer, as by their position they should naturally refer, to the pre-incarnate Logos."[86] It is my hope that the formal, literary analysis offered here will secure that interpretation, with all of its consequences (adumbrated as well by Dodd) for comprehending the relationship of nascent "Christianity" to "Judaism."

The arguments in favor of identifying the *Gattung* of the text as hymn are not, in and of themselves, conclusive: a) The fact that the Prologue "has in it instances of Hebrew . . . parallelism"[87] only argues for the close dependence of this text, in some way or another, on a biblical intertext. b) The fact that there are hymns to Jesus Christ mentioned in early literature from Asia Minor and that various New Testament hymnic materials (allegedly!; there is circularity here) show similar themes to the Prologue hardly counts as evidence for the *form* either.[88] c) On formal grounds, the Prologue to John is not really similar to the Wisdom hymns to which Epp has appealed. They are mostly in the first person and represent either

[84]Ibid., 28–29.

[85]Cf. "I conclude that the substance of a Logos-doctrine similar to that of Philo is present all through the gospel, and that the use of the actual term λόγος in the Prologue, in a sense corresponding to that doctrine, though it is unparalleled in the rest of the gospel, falls readily in place" (Dodd, *Interpretation*, 279).

[86]Dodd, *Interpretation*, 281.

[87]Epp, "Wisdom," 129.

[88]*Pace* Brown, *John*, 1:20–21, and arguing against de Ausejo, "*himno*." In Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, 151–52, we find a magnificent interpretation of Col 1:15–20 (another

the speech of personified Wisdom herself or of the object of her instruction.[89] This is thematized directly at Sir 24:1 in an apparent allusion to the characteristic form of the genre: "Wisdom sings her own praises, before her own people she proclaims her glory."

The theory that the Prologue is based on a hymn also has had some negative philological and interpretative consequences. For one thing, it has led to a nearly endless round of speculations on what ought and what ought not be included in the hymn, an endless round of amputations to the text.[90] As one very recent interpreter has put it: "But no hymn has emerged, at least not one on which scholars agree. Even parts of vv. 1–5 are in dispute. Nor has the church ever used it as a hymn—unlike, say, Mary's canticle (Luke 1:46–55)—even though it has employed it greatly, particularly as a blessing over the sick and over newly baptized children."[91] Brown affords a convenient summary of the multifarious efforts to somehow dig out a hymnic text from the text as it is, revealing, I think, the inevitable failure of the attempt.[92] The key to unlocking this difficult text is to be found, instead, in the recognition that the Wisdom aretalogy is, indeed, its theme, but not its *Gattung*.

The scholars who have pointed so clearly to the traditional elements of Wisdom hymn literature in the Prologue have, therefore, made a major contribution in emphasizing that the Wisdom hymns—with their assertion of Wisdom as the source of Light and Life who dwells with God from the Beginning, creates, and saves—are indeed closely related in some way to the Prologue to John. Moreover, the point that frequently in these hymns, as well as in other biblical Wisdom texts, "Wisdom" is identified with the Word of God is compelling and very important. What we need is an alternative form-critical proposal that takes seriously the obvious thematic connections between this text and the Wisdom hymns without assuming a formal identity with them.

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alleged "hymn"), which demonstrates that this text is also a homily on Genesis *cum* Proverbs 8 very much in the mold of the one that I am arguing for in the Fourth Gospel. Now whether or not this passage is "Pauline" I shall leave to my betters in NT scholarship to decide, but certain I am that it is *formally* akin, almost identical in form and structure (as well as thought), to the first five verses of John's Prologue. If, therefore, as Davies demonstrates, that text is midrash, then ours is as well.

[89]So Proverbs 8: "H' created me at the beginning of his ways"; Ben Sira 24: "I came forth from the mouth of the Most High." Epp himself clearly sensed the formal differences between the Prologue to John and the "OT and Apocrypha Wisdom hymns," which "do not match the former in conciseness!" (Epp, "Wisdom," 130).

[90]Cf. epigraph to this section from Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, 151.

[91]Thomas L. Brodie, *The Gospel According to John: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993) 134.

[92]Brown, *John*, 1:21–23.

I read the first five verses as a coherent, pre-existent logos manifesting a particular *Gattung*, a synagogue homily of the Proem variety, and having a particular *Sitz im Leben* which the latter thirteen verses expand and comment upon, a possibility which the "hymnic" proposal does not allow. This interpretation of the text is strongly supported by the Coptic translations that put a break after the first five verses.[93] This understanding of the text obviates the need to perform surgery upon it.

In this text we find not a hymn, but a midrash; that is, not a poem, but a narrative, a *chronologically* ordered text.[94] As early as 1969, Peder Borgen pointed the way to this literary understanding of the Prologue to the Fourth Gospel.[95] According to Borgen, the Prologue is a homily on the beginning of Genesis. Borgen shows there how the first five verses are simply a "targumic" paraphrase of Gen 1:1–5 (using, as such Targums do, the methods of midrash), while the rest of the Prologue is a tripartite expansion of this paraphrase, making clear that the midrash of the Logos is to be applied to the appearance of Jesus Christ.[96]

If the whole Prologue is an interpolated hymn, then it represents one literary unit through v. 18, but if the first five verses are a midrash on Gen 1:1–5, then our understanding of the thirteen verses that follow is significantly altered. Rather than representing a poetic text interpolated and clumsily glossed with prosy "interruptions," the interpretation that I suggest takes it as a well-integrated narrative that bridges the temporal gap between the pre-existent Logos and the Incarnation as the story of the Gospel. Thus, recognizing that the verses of John follow the order of the first five verses of Genesis in targumic/midrashic fashion enables us to avoid baseless statements such as those of Haenchen, paraphrasing Bultmann: "[Bultmann] has spoken out against the earlier popular supposition that the

[93]As I am informed by Karen King. For the transition between midrashic and liturgical forms, such as the *Piyyut* (the synagogue poetry of the Byzantine period, bearing much affinity with Christian hymnody), see Aaron Mirsky, *Yesode Surot Ha-Piyut Semihatan We-Hitpathutan Šel Ṣurot Ha-Širah Ha-Ereṣ-Yiśreʾelit Ha-Qeduma* (English title: The Origin of Forms of Early Hebrew Poetry; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1985).

[94]I remain less than persuaded by most suggestions of an all-inclusive chiastic structure for the Prologue. For a good review of the evidence, see Alan Culpepper, "The Pivot of John's Prologue," *NTS* 27 (1980) 1–31. See Brown, *John*, 1:23 who seems to share my skepticism (or rather, I share his). The chiastic structures that all agree are to be found here play a limited role, and seem no more than a reflex of (Hebrew) biblical style. My argument is in direct opposition to the position of most commentators; for a good example, see again Culpepper, "Pivot," 13: "The Prologue contains other structures, but its basic structure is chiastic rather than chronological." I propose, at any rate, that its basic structure is chronological, not poetic.

[95]Peder Borgen, "Observations on the Targumic Character of the Prologue of John," *NTS* 16 (1969/1970) 288–95; Peder Borgen, "Logos Was the True Light: Contributions to the Interpretation of the Prologue of John," *NovT* 14 (1972) 115–30.

[96]For discussions of other midrashic aspects of the Fourth Gospel, see Peder Borgen, "Observations on the Midrashic Character of John 6," *ZNW* 54 (1963) 232–40; also Hartwig Thyen, "Das Heil kommt von den Juden," in *Kirche. Festschrift für Günther Bornkamm zum*

Johannine Logos is the 'he said' (εἶπεν, ויאמר), become a person, in the creation narrative of the LXX. In the first place, there is no mention of the creation in John 1:1f. In the second place, Judaism never took that 'and God said' (εἶπεν) as a person standing alongside God. The designation in the Talmud [*sic*!] מימרא (=Word) always appears as the *Memra* of Yahweh or of Adonai."[97] This statement is simply fallacious on all grounds. First, the analysis of the first five verses as midrash (indeed the very phrase "In the beginning" itself) shows that creation is precisely being spoken of in the text. Second, the מימרא never appears in the Talmud, ever, or anywhere else in rabbinic literature, but in the Targum, where it functions exactly as the Logos does; of course, it is the מימרא of God. What else could it be? It is, as we have seen, the hypostasized Word of God, i.e., the Logos.[98] Third, we have seen in the exegesis of the Targum of Gen 1:3 above precisely how the מימרא, *Memra*, was indeed derived from the "and he said" of creation.

The present interpretative perspective, moreover, as opposed to Bultmann's, allows us to hypothesize an origin for the first five verses of the Prologue in the Jewish Koine of the time of the Gospel, a Koine that is then "Christianized"—*avant la lettre*, of course—in the succeeding verses. In other words, the advantages of this interpretation are threefold, and the three folds are homologous with each other. On the formal or literary level (invoking the hermeneutical principle of charity) we end up with a superior text in that when v. 14 announces the Incarnation, there has been a history that has prepared the way for that moment without, however, anticipating it and spoiling the drama. On the theological level, the Prologue now presents us with a clear account of the preexistent Logos and the *reason* for the Incarnation. On the level of the history of religions, we see that this preexistent Logos, i.e., the preexistent Logos upon which the Fourth Gospel is founded, in every sense, is a Jewish Logos, and the continuity of Johannine religion with the Judaism of its day is assured. I shall now try to give this Logos flesh.

One of the most characteristic forms of midrash is a homily on a pericope from the Pentateuch which invokes, explicitly or implicitly, texts from either the Prophets or the Hagiographa (and very frequently specifically Psalms, Song of Songs, or Wisdom literature) as the intertextual framework of ideas and language that is used to interpret and expand the Pentateuchal text being preached. The first five verses of the Prologue to the Fourth Gospel fit this form nearly perfectly. The verses being preached are the opening verses of Genesis and the text that lies in the

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75. Geburtstag (ed. D. Lührmann and G. Strecker; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1980) 163–83. There is not a little irony in one of the key texts upon which western logocentrism is founded being itself a midrash, the very emblem of non-logocentric practice. This irony and the very problematic of the binary opposition logocentrism/midrash will be dealt with, *Deo volente*, in a forthcoming book.

[97]Haenchen, *John*, 1:136.

[98]For Bultmann's view, see Bultmann, *John*, 21–22 and passim.

background as hermeneutic intertext is Prov 8:22–31. The primacy of Genesis as exegeted text explains why we have here "Logos" and not "Sophia," a fact that remains nearly inexplicable on the theory that a Hymn to Wisdom, modeled on the Proverbs or Wisdom hymns, is to be found here.[99] Following the generic analysis that I have just presented, an explanation can be offered. In an intertextual interpretative practice such as a midrash, imagery and language may be drawn from one intertext, but the controlling language of the discourse is naturally the text that is being exegeted and preached, not its intertextual congeners. The preacher of the Prologue to John had to speak of Logos here, because his homiletical effort is directed at the opening verses of Genesis, with their majestic: "And God said: Let there be light, and there was light." It is the "saying" of God that produces the light, and indeed through this saying everything was made that was made.[100]

In Philo, as well as in others, Sophia and the Logos are identified as a single entity. Indeed, we find God's Wisdom and his Word already as parallels in the Hebrew itself. Consequently, nothing could be more natural for a preacher than to draw from the Wisdom hymns and especially the canonical Proverbs the figure, epithets, and qualities of the *deuteros theos*, the companion of God and agent of God in creation, while for the purposes of interpreting creation focussing on the linguistic side of the coin, the Logos. I thus agree with Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza in her contention that "The narrative characterization of Jesus" in the Fourth Gospel "seems to speak [for] Jesus [as] Wisdom Incarnate":[101]

> 1. In the beginning was the word,
> And the word was with God,
> 2. And the word was God.
> He was in the beginning with God.
> 3. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made.
> 4. In him was life, and the life was the light of men.
> 5. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not receive it.[102]

[99]Thus, the explanations that the Logos has taken the role of Sophia because it is somehow unfitting for Sophia to become incarnated in a male human beg the question entirely. *Pace*, e.g. Haenchen, *John*, 1:126: "Of course, Wisdom (σοφία) as a feminine form could not then be identified with the figure that subsequently becomes man," to which I ask: why on earth not?

[100]Contrast Bultmann, "History of Religions," 37.

[101]Schüssler Fiorenzá, *Miriam's Child*, 152. See also, "Rather than just being *influenced* by Sophia speculation, the Christology of the Fourth Gospel is nothing less than a *thoroughgoing* Sophia Christology" (Scott, *Sophia and the Johannine Jesus*, 29) and Alison E. Jasper, *The Shining Garment of the Text: Gendered Readings of John's Prologue* (JSNTSup; Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998).

[102]For this translation as a possible one, see commentaries. For my reasons for adopting it, see below.

One of the most important observations that has been made about this text is that its formal structure, the envelope structure of the first two verses is highly biblical in form (i.e., in my parlance, "Hebraic") in its use of chiasm[103] and *Leitwort*. We learn two things from this observation. First of all, it seems very difficult to regard the second verse as a gloss or other form of intrusion, as most commentators of the hymnic persuasion seem to; and second, if its structure is dictated or modeled on biblical literary texts (indeed, on the opening verses of Genesis), then the possibility that it is a paraphrase or midrashic gloss on this text seems considerably enhanced.

The vaunted hymnic repetitions of words from strophe to strophe, "In the beginning was the *Word*, and the *Word* was God" can be interpreted as an expansion of the formal pattern found already in the first verse of Genesis: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the *earth*, and the *earth* was without form and void." The assertion that the Word was with God is easily related to Prov 8:30: "Then I was beside him,"[104] and even to Wis 9:9: "With thee is wisdom." On the other hand, such themes as the arrival of the Word on earth and his living among men can clearly be traced as allusions to texts like Bar 3:38: "Afterward she appeared upon earth and lived among men." As frequently with rabbinic midrash, the gloss on the verse being interpreted is dependent on an alluded-to but not explicitly cited later biblical text. This can be compared with the Palestinian Targum to this very verse, which translates "In the beginning" by "*With Wisdom God created*,"[105] clearly alluding as well to the Proverbs passage. "Beginning" is read as Wisdom or as the Logos: By a Beginning—Wisdom—God created. To this midrash should be compared the famous Latin version of John 8:25, so beautifully read by Augustine as "Your Word, the Beginning who also speaks to us,"[106] once again reading "Beginning" twice. As Augustine paraphrases this tradition: "Wisdom is 'the Beginning': and it is in that Beginning that You made heaven and earth."

Now we can understand the role of the Wisdom hymns differently in the production of this text. They are not the formal model for the Prologue to John, but, as the intertext for the Logos midrash of the Prologue to John, they do provide us with access to a pre-Christian world of ideas in which Wisdom was personified

[103]For a convenient summary of previous chiastic structural analyses, see Culpepper, "Pivot," 6–9 and also Haenchen, *John*, 1:110, 125.

[104]Cf. Bultmann, "History of Religions," 36.

[105]Klein, *Fragment-Targums*, 1:43.

[106]*Confessions* 11.8. Augustine, *Confessions Books I–XIII* (trans. F. J. Sheed; Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993) 217, 254. I am considerably less persuaded than Raymond Brown that "The Latin translations give prominence to a mistaken reading which cannot be justified by the Greek. They take 'the beginning' as a nominative instead of an accusative and render: '[I am] the beginning who also speaks to you' or '[I am] the beginning because I speak to you' " (Brown, *John*, 1:348).

and characterized in ways that are very similar to the Logos of Logos theology. They thus provide us with evidence that the latter is not a specifically or exclusively Christian product, but a common "Jewish" theologoumenon which was later identified with the Christ.[107] On the other hand, the "shift" from Sophia to Logos can now be accounted for differently. Since the text is a midrash on Genesis, and as we have seen from the targumic comparisons, the *Memra* is derived from the activity of God's speech in Genesis 1:3 understood as an actual divine being, we should expect the same midrashic entity here, as well.

On this interpretation, the Prologue is a shared or Koine "Jewish" non-christological midrashic expansion of Gen 1:1–5 along the lines of Logos/*Memra* theology, followed by a christological interpretation and expansion of this inherited midrash. This suggests to me at least the possibility that the first part (up to v. 6 and the first appearance of the Baptist) represents a text inherited by the Evangelist. This preexistent midrash on creation is then turned into another kind of midrash, by itself being elaborated into an extended narrative via the application to it, as a virtual hermeneutical key, of the well-attested myth of Wisdom's frustration in her desire (and God's) that she find a home in the world, a frustration for which a new cure will be offered: God's extraordinary Incarnation of his son, the Logos. The virtue of this reading is that it helps make eminent sense of the function of the Prologue in this Gospel. It anchors the christological story in a cosmological narrative and in the traditions of the Jews as well, albeit in quite a different manner from that of the Synoptics. From a literary point of view, it leads to a strong appreciation of the role of the Prologue in the Gospel as a whole and the nexus between the first five verses and the continuation.

[107]*Pace* Schnackenburg, *John*, 233: "The prologue (or the Logos-hymn) is orientated from the start to the incarnate Logos. . . . Vv. 1–2 are not a cosmological meditation put forward for its own sake, but the first strophe of a Christian hymn of praise for the Redeemer. . . . The personal character of the Logos forms a definite contrast to the Wisdom speculation of Hellenistic Judaism, to the doctrine of the Logos in Philo." I, obviously, fail completely to see this "definite contrast" and think that it is only perceived with eyes of faith. Of course, the evangelist, in telling the story of creation via the Logos, its attempts to reveal itself in the world, and the ultimate Oikonomia, has the end in mind from the beginning, but he is too good a narrator to anticipate the end in the beginning. More to the point, his Logos-theology, until the Incarnation, is, I warrant, not substantially different from that of other Jews. The same apologetic point, I think, leads Schnackenburg to assert that "Wisdom (Sophia, *hokhmāh*) is pictured as God's compánion and partner in the creation of all things, but the Logos is really there before creation, in personal fellowship with God, living in God and from God" (Schnackenburg, *John*, 234). Reading Proverbs 8 will reveal no difference between that existence of Wisdom and that of the Logos here. She too was "with him at the Beginning." Could she not too have been "in the bosom of the Father," *pace* Schnackenburg? *This author seems absolutely determined at all costs to maintain the supersession of the OT Wisdom and Jewish Logos, in the Logos of John.*

Verse 5 ends on the following note: καὶ τὸ φῶς ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ φαίνει, καὶ ἡ σκοτία αὐτὸ *οὐ κατέλαβεν*, (emphasis added) translated in the RSV as "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." At first glance, this seems an appropriate translation; οὐ κατέλαβεν certainly carries the sense of "has not overcome it." This is, moreover, a plausible gloss on Genesis's "divided between the darkness and the light."[108] However, there is another sense to the verb, namely, "has not received/comprehended it."[109] This is, to my mind, almost certainly the sense that the continuation of the text reads here.[110] If v. 5 tells us that the light was continuously shining in the darkness,[111] but the darkness did not receive it, then we understand immediately the necessity for this to be followed by: "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came for testimony, to bear witness to the light, that all might believe through him." No longer, as many commentators would have it, an intrusion into the text, this is a most plausible sequel to the frustration of the light's design to shine in the darkness. The near-rhyme between κατέλαβεν in v. 5 and παρέλαβον in v. 11 lends aid to this reading as well, as does also the further repeat of this root in v. 12 and its final appearance in v. 16.[112]

Verse 6 is then a transition between the "Targum" of the first five verses and the narrative gloss on it that follows. It is here, I think, that the virtue of this analysis is made manifest, for by reading the first five verses as a pre-existent logos which the Johannine text adopted and expanded via the next 13 verses, we can avoid an aporia to which the current literary analyses in nearly all their versions lead. One way of getting at this problem is by citing a famous controversy between Bultmann and his disciple Käsemann. According to Bultmann, since v. 5 *cannot* refer to the Incarnation, then vv. 6–7 must be an addition to the text from a redactor (the Evangelist) who did not understand the text before him, wherein it is only at v. 14 that the Incarnation is spoken of (and I agree, of course, with the last of these points).[113] On the other hand, according to Käsemann, since there is no reason to strike vv. 6–7 or assume that they are a later addition to the text (and here I

[108]For other related glosses on this verse, see F. Stanley Jones, *An Ancient Jewish Christian Source on the History of Christianity: Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions 1.27–71* (Texts and Translations: Christian Apocrypha Series; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995) 52.

[109]As translated in the King James Version ("comprehended"). Interestingly, the same two meanings can be found in the Hebrew השיג, which is indeed the way that Delitzsch renders the Greek in Hebrew.

[110]So Haenchen, *John*, 1:114: "The darkness has not comprehended it." Similarly Schnackenburg, *John*, 246–47: "If the evangelist is thinking in v. 5 of the encounter of the Logos, the light, with the world of men—as can hardly be doubted after v. 4—then of the two possible meanings of καταλαμβανεῖν, "master" (=overwhelm) and "grasp" (= embrace with mind and will), only the second can be considered." See also Brown, *John*, 1:8.

[111]Cf. Bultmann, *John*, 45–46.

[112]I happily follow here Bultmann, *John*, 48 n. 1.

[113]Bultmann, "History of Religions," 42.

agree with *him*), vv. 5 ff. *must* refer to the *Logos Ensarkos*. But they can't both be right. Brown, in fact, argues that they are both wrong,[114] and I agree, although not necessarily for his reasons. The author of the Gospel, in providing a transition from the Genesis midrash to the interpretation of that midrash, began by proleptically indicating the role of the Baptist in the salvation history that he is about to relate, thus providing a transition from the Genesis midrash to the Wisdom-Christ aretalogy to follow. By indicating the role of the Baptist as the harbinger of the Incarnation, he effectively provides an introduction and frame for the Wisdom aretalogy, culminating in the Christology that follows it in vv. 7–14, recapitulated in the second framing verse mentioning the Baptist, v. 15. There is, therefore, no longer a need to assume either that v. 6 is a later interpolation into the alleged hymn or that the text comprehends the Incarnation before that event is actually related in v. 14.[115] Indeed there is a perfect homology between form and content here. Just as John the Baptist represents a transition between the Jewish Koine traditions and the advent of the Incarnate Logos, so his verse represents a transition in the text between the Koine midrash and the advent of the specific Johannine sequel. We thus preserve both the drama of the salvation history according to John and the religio-cultural history of the relation of the Johannine community to its Jewish context.

As a further argument in favor of reading vv. 6ff. as a narrative gloss on the first five verses, I offer the following consideration: Verses 10–11 read: ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ἦν, καὶ ὁ κόσμος δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, καὶ ὁ κόσμος αὐτὸν οὐκ ἔγνω. εἰς τὰ ἴδια ἦλθεν, καὶ οἱ ἴδιοι αὐτὸν *οὐ παρέλαβον* ("He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world knew him not. He came into his own home, and his own people *received* him *not*"). I think that it is most attractive to read these verses as a Sophialogical[116] gloss on the midrash of the first five verses.[117]

[114]Brown, *John*, 1:26.

[115]Almost all interpreters since Maldonatus, according to Schnackenburg (*John*, 258) and such interpreters as Büchsel, Bauer, Harnack, and Käsemann (Brown, *John*, 1:30), have claimed that the Logos Incarnate is referred to well before v. 14. But see Brown, *John*, 1:28–29, who while accepting this interpretation himself, refers to Westcott, Bernard, and Boismard as holding "that the reference to the Word's presence in the world in vv. 10–12 is to be interpreted in terms of the activity of the divine word in the OT period." According to my construal of the structure of the Prologue, one can hold such a view without assuming that "this view means that the editor of the Prologue misunderstood the hymn in inserting the reference to John the Baptist before v. 10," *pace* Brown, *John*, 1:29.

[116]For Sophialogy, especially as relevant to the Fourth Gospel, see Michael E. Willett, *Wisdom Christology in the Fourth Gospel* (San Francisco: Mellen Research University Press, 1992); Scott, *Sophia and the Johannine Jesus*; Schüssler Fiorenza, *Miriam's Child*; Sharon H. Ringe, *Wisdom's Friends: Community and Christology in the Fourth Gospel* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox, 1999); and also Mack, *Logos und Sophia*.

[117]Note that this interpretation removes the concern that vv. 9–11 are a tautological repetition of vv. 4–5; they are an interpretative gloss on them. Cf. Brown, *John*, 1:26. See also Bultmann, *John*, 53–58 for a somewhat similar approach.

The common myth, the Wisdom aretalogy, the narrative of Wisdom's entry into the world and her failure to find a home there, has been applied by the Evangelist to the first five verses of Genesis as read by the Greek Targum that constitutes the first five verses of the Fourth Gospel.[118] The myth is thus rendered intertext and hermeneutical key for understanding this "Targum." Accordingly, v. 10 repeats v. 3 and expands on it, while v. 11 repeats and expands on the idea of v. 5. The "darkness" of the Genesis midrash has now become the cosmos, which although made by the light does not recognize or receive it, thus explaining the need for the advent of Jesus as the Logos Incarnate and his forerunner herald.[119] The material about the Baptist has thus been tightly woven into the old Wisdom myth in a way that suggests that this was the version of the myth that this Johannine community performed, seamlessly producing a transition between the old story and their present experience (or tradition), in which the Baptist came before the Christ, witnessing the presence of the Logos in the world, and preaching his coming into the World as human flesh (v. 15).[120] Verses 6 and 15 thus frame the specifically Johannine version of the myth of Wisdom's failure to be comprehended in the world and the cure for that frustration in the Incarnation. Verse 6 describes the Baptist's witness before the Incarnation and v. 15 his testimony to the fulfillment of his testimony after that event.

In this reading, then, these verses are anything but interruptions in the text.[121] "This was he" (v. 15), "of whom I said" (in v. 6, as it were), "He who comes . . ." With vv. 1–5 having been made midrashically to relate the story of Wisdom's attempts to enter the world and the frustration of those attempts, we have precisely explained the need for there to be "a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came for testimony, to bear witness to the light, that all might believe through him,"[122]

[118]*Pace* Haenchen, *John*, 102. I would suggest that if in 1 Cor 1:21–25, Paul is referring to this myth, it is a very sour version of it indeed, consistently varying, I would add, with the difference between his version of the role of the Torah and that of the Fourth Evangelist.

[119]" 'Darkness' in John means primarily the world estranged from God, the place of man's existence not yet (or no longer, if the dawn of creation is considered) illuminated by divine light" (Schnackenburg, *John*, 245).

[120]Thus, in my opinion, it is quite unnecessary to claim that "v. 16 does not represent a continuation of the words of the Baptist. Rather v. 16 continues the confession of the community in v. 14" (Culpepper, "Pivot," 11), because the words of the Baptist are being cited in the confession of the community. On the other hand, I do not believe that the presence of vv. 6–8 in their present position indicate that the following verses are to be read as being about the Logos Ensarkos, for reasons that will become clear below, contra, e.g., Emanuel Hirsch, *Studien zum Vierten Evangelium (Text/Literarkritik/Entstehungsgeschichte)* (BHTh 11; Tübingen: Mohr, 1936) 45.

[121]Cf. also Hooker, "John the Baptist."

[122]Cf. Haenchen, *John*, 1:114–17 for a good summary of the current views.

but then the narration of the events that lead up to that moment is retold in greater detail in vv. 7–13, and there is no denotation of the Incarnation prior to v. 14.[123]

As for the much-controverted vv. 11, 12, and 13—"He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God"—I reckon that they may be legible on the model of Justin's argument in the *Apologies* that there were a certain number of people who received the Logos even before the Incarnation.[124] In support of the suggestion that this is a Johannine idea, I would offer John 8:56, in which the Logos Incarnate claims already to have revealed himself to Abraham before the Incarnation. What, after all, could be more explicit than Gen 15:1, "And it was after these things that the Word [λόγος] of God appeared to Abraham"? And in v. 6, where it says that "Abraham believed in God and he reckoned it for him as righteousness," the Targum has, "Abraham believed the *Memra* of God." Abraham, then, would be one of those "who received him" and "became children of God."[125]

Indeed, this entire passage is a midrash on Genesis 15, illuminated by the Logos. Earlier in the passage, Jesus says to the "Ioudaioi" who have declared, "Abraham is our father": "If you were Abraham's children, you would do what Abraham did, but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth which I heard from God; this is not what Abraham did" (vv. 39–40). The "Ioudaioi" answer: "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God" (v. 41). In other words, these Jews wish to claim precisely that because their father Abraham had received the Logos, and thereby became a child of God, they too have inherited that very status, to which Jesus answers that if they were indeed children of Abraham, they would behave as he had done. And after much further conversation, including the notorious "You are of your father the devil," comes the passage in which, after arousing the incredulity of the people by telling them that "Your father Abraham rejoiced that he was to see my day; he saw it and was glad," to wit,

[123]For an eloquent defense of this position, see Dodd, *Interpretation*, 282–83. In the following pages, Dodd considers the other possible interpretation, namely that vv. 12–13 describe the activity of the *Logos Ensarkos*, in my humble opinion a much weaker approach. See also Bultmann, "History of Religions," 29–30, who sees two levels within the text, an original one in which the *Logos Asarkos* was intended and a "Christian" level in which the "tragedy of Jesus' life" is comprehended. See also Bultmann, *John*, 46–47.

[124]For a similar interpretation, see Schnackenburg, *John*, 256–57. This was, according to Schnackenburg, the almost unanimous interpretation of the Fathers of the Church as well. As the Rabbis say: When the elders say "spend," and the juveniles say, "save": then spend!

[125]Contra Brown, *John*, 1:29, who thinks that "children of God" can only be after the Incarnation. Cf. however Dodd, *Interpretation*, 270–71 for an interpretation very close to the one given here. Cf. the similar idea in the apparently independent Justin Martyr in *Ap*. 1.46.2–3.

"You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?" (v. 57), Jesus answers them, "Truly, truly I say to you, before Abraham was, I am" (v. 58).

This passage seems to me full of echoes of our verses in the Prologue and supports the interpretation that I have given them. The Logos clearly claims to have appeared to Abraham (presumably in the theophany at Mamre); Abraham, of course, rejoiced, received the Logos handsomely, and was saved. His descendants make precisely the same claim for themselves that is made for those who have accepted the Logos, namely, that "they have become children of God; who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God" (1:12–13),[126] and the Logos rejects their claim vigorously. This interpretation seems much more compelling than current standard ones, such as that of Brown, who writes, "That Abraham would not kill a divine messenger may be a general inference from Abraham's character, or perhaps a specific reference to a scene like that of Gen xviii where he welcomed divine messengers."[127] Given Jesus' insistence that Abraham has seen him and he Abraham, the interpretation offered above seems to me much more cogent. It should be noted that the weakness of Brown's interpretation here—if I am at all right in my judgment—is a direct consequence of his refusal to read vv. 6–13 as referring to the appearance of the *Logos Asarkos* on earth prior to the Incarnation.[128]

Something like my reading was current among interpreters of the Fourth Gospel until Maldonatus (16th century).[129] I am happy to be thus medieval. It must also be remembered that the second of the "four nights" is the one in which the *Memra* appeared to Abraham. The enormous importance placed on Mamre by very early Christians, including Constantine's early basilica there, as the site of the appearance of the Logos to Abraham is suggestive, if hardly probative.[130] The description of Sozomen is certainly evocative. Referring to an annual feast held at Hebron (Mamre), the church historian writes, "Indeed this feast is diligently fre-

[126]Brown, ibid., seemingly completely overlooks this possibility of interpretation, in spite of the clear verbal echoes between the language of ch. 8 and that of the Prologue.

[127]Ibid., 1:357.

[128]Compare also the not atypical interpretation of G. H. C. Macgregor: "Late Jewish thought [*sic*] depicted the patriarchs as rising from Sheol to greet the Messiah on his appearance . . . . The meaning is not that Abraham had any such vision while still on earth, . . . but that he is *not* dead, as the Jews wrongly hold" (*The Gospel of John* [MNTC; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1936] 223). Bultmann (*John*, 326–27) also understands that it is the eschatalogical day that is being spoken of. Similarly, R. H. Lightfoot: "There is other evidence of a Jewish belief that Abraham rejoiced in a foresight of the messianic age" (*St. John's Gospel: A Commentary* [ed. C. F. Evans; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956] 197).

[129]Brown, *John*, 1:359.

[130]Aryeh Kofsky, "Mamre: A Case of a Regional Cult?" in *Sharing the Sacred: Religious Contacts and Conflicts in the Holy Land: First-Fifteenth Centuries CE* (ed. Guy Stroumsa and Arieh Kofsky; Jerusalem: Yad Ben Zvi, 1998) 22–23.

quented by all nations: by the Jews, because they boast of their descent from the patriarch Abraham; by the pagans, because angels there appeared to men; and by Christians because He who has lately revealed himself through the virgin for the salvation of mankind once appeared there to the pious man" (*Hist. Ecc.* 2.4).[131] Sozomen is either interpreting the Fourth Gospel or reflecting the same tradition. I thus see here a strong footing for interpreting those verses of the Prologue as referring to the time *before* the Incarnation, to the prior revelations of the Logos, as in Justin, and therefore as issuing in a strong connection between the Prologue as reread here and the rest of the Gospel.

In addition to the more general reading of these verses as referring to the appearances of the Logos to particular individuals before the advent of Jesus, we might also take them specifically as a reference to the giving of the Torah to Israel and the failure of that instrument as a means of bringing the Logos into the world, because Israel did not understand, as will be recapitulated in v. 17.[132] I think that these two interpretations are consistent with each other and can both be maintained at the same time. On this reading, these verses would provide almost a retort to such an interpretation of the Wisdom myth as is found in Sir 24, whereby Wisdom finally finds a home in Israel in the form of the Torah.[133] Sharon Ringe has pointed out that such retorts or "parodies" were already found in non-Christian apocalyptic texts as well. Referring to 1 Enoch and 2 Esdras (apocalypses from the end of the Second Temple Period), she writes: "In what looks like a parody on Sir 24 and Bar 3:9–4:4, the unrighteousness of Israel has driven Wisdom back to heaven. Jerusalem cannot contain her, nor can the Torah given to Israel provide her a toehold among humankind. Instead, what before was represented as her powerful divine presence on earth is elevated into heavenly absence and to the company of the angels. She is safely limited not in any loss of personal agency but in access by those human beings whose faith takes shape around her."[134] Here is the particularly rich exemplar from 1 Enoch:

[131]Translated in Kofsky, "Mamre," 24.

[132]Dodd (*Interpretation*, 271, 295) and Barrett (*John*, 136) both hold a version of this view. This would be a direct challenge to Bultmann's statement that the Prologue contains no "history of revelation" (Bultmann, *John*, 21).

[133]Note that the Torah (Wisdom) spreads out branches of χάρις in Ben Sira, suggesting again the possibility of Johannine allusion to that passage.

[134]Ringe, *Wisdom's Friends*, 42. See in general pp. 37–45 for a succinct and clear account of the role of personified Wisdom in the biblical and postbiblical literature. I dissent from her, as above, only in her account of why Sophia has become the Logos in the Fourth Gospel. Epp's statement, to wit, "both the Wisdom hymns and the Judaism of the time recognized the *equation of Wisdom and Torah*" (Epp, "Wisdom," 133) has, therefore, to be modified: *some* of the Wisdom hymns recognized this equation and others denied it; and, in any case, what can be meant by the "Wisdom hymns" and "Judaism" as two separate entities in the same category?

> Wisdom could not find a place in which she could dwell;
> but a place was found (for her) in the heavens.
> Then Wisdom went out to dwell with the children of the people,
> but she found no dwelling place.
> So Wisdom returned to her place
> and she settled permanently among the angels. (1 Enoch 42:1–2)[135]

Furthermore, we find the following in another "perfectly Jewish" text, 4 Ezra 7:72: "Though they had understanding they committed iniquity, and though they received the commandments they did not keep them, and though they obtained the Law they dealt unfaithfully with what they received." This narrative is thus to be seen too as arising wholly from within insider Jewish narratives and theological perspectives. Compare John 7:19: "Has not Moses given you the Torah? And none of you does the Torah." As Stephen Motyer has insightfully written, "Against this background the claim of the Fourth Gospel that Jesus has descended from heaven to tell 'heavenly things' (3:12) takes on new relevance. We need to read John carefully against the background of this twin concern for theodicy and revelation."[136]

According to the Evangelist, while Israel, which had been given the Torah, nevertheless rejected the Logos, some others, not necessarily Israel by virtue of flesh-and-blood parentage,[137] became children of God via their receiving of the *Logos Asarkos*.[138] John's thought here would be not entirely unlike Paul's in 2 Cor 6:16–21, where, alluding to the Prophets, Paul says: "as God said, 'I will live in them and move among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Therefore come out from them, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch nothing unclean; then I will welcome you, and I will be a father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.' " It is also related to Philo's thought in the *Conf. Ling*. 145–47: "those who live in the knowledge of the One are rightly called 'sons of God.' "[139] This explains well, in my opinion, the emphasis on the Logos coming into his own home and his own people receiving him not, without necessitating an interpretation whereby the Incarnation is mentioned before v. 14. This event happened already before the Incarnation. Israel, who had had the Torah, did not accept Wisdom, but some select Israelites, such as

[135]*OTP*, 1:33.

[136]Stephen Motyer, *Your Father the Devil?: A New Approach to John and "the Jews"* (Paternoster Biblical and Theological Studies; Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1997) 85.

[137]Dodd, *Interpretation*, 271.

[138]I see no need, therefore, to multiply entities by assuming that the original hymnologist "probably still means the time before the Incarnation. The evangelist, however, has the eschatological revelation of the incarnate Logos constantly before his mind" (Schnackenburg, *John*, 245).

[139]Culpepper, "Pivot," 21.

Abraham, and even Gentiles, did. They are called "children of God."[140] The Incarnation, therefore, is shown by the Evangelist as indispensable to save the many, both of Israel and of the Nations as well. Wisdom had not found a home in Israel, and the revelation of the Torah was not sufficient, as will be made explicit v. 17.[141]

This is the beginning of the specifically "Christian" kerygma. According to this reading, the structure of the Prologue consists of an unexceptionably "Jewish" Logos/*Memra* midrash on Gen 1:1–5 which has been interpreted via the Sophia myth by the author of the Fourth Gospel, an interpretation crying in the wilderness that then beautifully prepares the way for the Incarnation to come in v. 14. Reading the Prologue in this way makes the coherence of the Evangelist's text much more impressive, in that we avoid the necessity of assuming a series of inchoate proleptic intimations of the Incarnation before it actually is narrated in v. 14. The three sections of the Prologue are thus a general narrative of the activity of the Logos based on a "midrash" on Genesis 1, an expansion of that narrative via the myth of Wisdom's misfortune in the world, narrating as well the failure of Torah to bring the Logos to the People, and then the new christological denouement to that myth.[142] The Gospel writer has accomplished two great works through the structure of this prologue and its narrative unfolding: He anchors the story of the Incarnation and life of Christ in the whole cosmology and the myth of the coming and rejection of the light, and he moors his own christological narrative in what was very conceivably a traditional Jewish midrash on Genesis 1.

Rethinking the question of genre or *Gattung* allows us to see that the Prologue is not a hymn, not a poetic form, and not addressed to or spoken by the Logos/Sophia, as we would expect from a Wisdom hymn, but precisely the sort of heightened narrative prose that we would expect in a targumic midrash. We are not then forced into conclusions such as: "It is striking that the Fourth Gospel begins with a prologue

[140]Culpepper shows as well that several rabbinic passages which insist that Israel according to the flesh are the Children of God can best be understood as an answer to the Christian claim. One text—albeit a relatively later, fourth-century one—makes this explicit (Culpepper, "Pivot," 22). In a text like 1 John 2:29, on the other hand, "everyone who does right [δικαιοσύνην] is born of him."

[141]Allusions to Sinai, as heard by Boismard here, are by no means out of place then (Marie-Émile Boismard, *Le Prologue de Saint Jean* [LD 11; Paris: Cerf, 1953] 165–75).

[142]Cf. "The cultic hymn thus reconstructed consists of four strophes. The first proclaims the primordial and divine being of the Logos and his role in creation, the second describes his significance for the world of men (life and light), the third laments the rejection of his work in humanity before the Incarnation, and the fourth finally praises the joyful event of the Incarnation which brings salvation to those who believe" (Schnackenburg, *John*, 226–27). The question is, why, therefore, assume a Logos hymn at all? A pre-existent Logos for sure, but why a pre-existent hymn? We end up with statements such as, "It is quite possible that the original hymn envisaged in strophes 2 and 3 the activity of the λόγος ἄσαρκος and that it was only the evangelist who saw everything in the perspective of the λόγος ἔνσαρκος, because in his Gospel all the interest is centered on the acceptance or rejection of the incarnate Son

unlike anything known to the Synoptics. For, the mention of the Baptist in the Prologue (vv. 6–8, 15) stems from a later hand. It was really a hymn directed to Jesus Christ, the Logos become flesh, the highest form of heavenly being after God."[143]

We now understand vv. 16–17 in a way that I think has been underplayed if it has been seen at all. "The law given through Moses" represents precisely the earlier attempt of the Logos to enter the world as adumbrated in vv. 12 and 13.[144] The myth of Wisdom that has been elaborated in vv. 9–13 relates the partial failure of the Word in the World. Although the Word is the creator of all, as we have learned in v. 3, all were not capable alone of receiving him. Indeed, his own people did not receive him when he came in the form of the Torah. As a result of this failure, however, this time Wisdom did not ascend once more into the heavens and abandon earth and its people, but God performed the extraordinary act of incarnating his Logos in flesh and blood, coming into the world as an incarnate avatar and teacher of the Word, not the words. Since the goal of the Logos was to make it possible for those who believed in his name to become not flesh and blood, but children of God, he who was properly the child of God, the *monogenes*, became flesh among us.

For John, as for that other most "Jewish" of Gospels, Matthew—but in a very different manner—Jesus comes to fulfill the mission of Moses, not to displace it.[145] The Torah simply needed a better exegete, the *Logos Ensarkos*, a fitting teacher for flesh and blood. Rather than supersession in the explicitly temporal sense within which Paul inscribes it, John's typology of Torah and Logos Incarnate is more easily read within the context of what Jacques Derrida has argued for as a prevailing assumption of Western thought, that oral teaching is more authentic and transparent than written texts.[146] God, thus, tried the text, and then sent his voice,

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of God" (Schnackenburg, *John*, 228). This doubleness, certainly a blunting of Ockham's razor if nothing else, seems unnecessary to me. Assuming that up until v. 14 it is the Logos Asarkos who acts makes better work of John's narrative as well, and we need, therefore, assume no pre-existent hymn.

[143]Haenchen, *John*, 1:122.

[144]Cf. Epp ("Wisdom," 136), who reads this connection differently. There are, nevertheless, some strong affinities between his interpretation and the one offered here. The biggest difference is methodological. Epp assumes contemporaneity between rabbinic theologoumena, attested in texts centuries later, and the Gospel, thus positing that the Gospel reacts to the "Jewish" ideas, reproducing inadvertently the supersessionist narrative. I, on the other hand, prefer to read the rabbinic texts in their own chronological context as very possibly a reaction to Christian developments.

[145]"From other references in the [fourth] gospel the reader can then be led to see that what the Torah was intended to, but could not, effect has been effected in Jesus" (John Suggit, "John XVII. 17. Ο ΛΟΓΟΣ Ο ΣΟΣ ΑΛΗΘΕΙΑ ΕΣΤΙΝ," *JTS* 35 [1984] 107).

[146]Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976). Contrast here the reading of Epp ("Wisdom," 140–41), who would inscribe a much more stringent contrast between Matthew's and John's views of the Torah than I would.

incarnated in the throat of Jesus.[147] After the Prologue, which truly introduces the narrative of the Word's coming into the world, its prehistory and its necessity, the Gospel moves naturally into the proper Gospel narration, with a Christology informed at all points by the prehistorical, cosmic myth of the Prologue.

A more general, perhaps hyperbolic, way of making this point would be to suggest that earliest Christian groups (including, or even especially, the Johannine one) distinguish themselves from non-Christian Jews not theologically, but only in their association of various Jewish theologoumena and mythologoumena with this particular Jew, Jesus of Nazareth.[148] The characteristic move that constructs what will become orthodox Christianity is, I think, the combination of obviously Jewish Messianic soteriology with equally Jewish Logos theology in the figure of Jesus.[149] I believe that this movement can be discerned in the Prologue to the Fourth Gospel, and even more in the "merging" within the eventual Christian canon of the Synoptics with the Fourth Gospel, and reading this appropriately is, therefore, key to understanding the historical relation of Christianity to Judaism. Emblematic (or rather a forerunner) of this "merging" would be the statement of Acts that "God made Jesus both Lord and Christ" (2:36). As Dunn richly documents, it is neither the "Lord" nor "Christ" that is a novum in the new movement, it is the "Jesus."[150]

[147]"The letter, says Lacan, cannot be divided: 'But if it is first of all on the materiality of the signifier that we have insisted, that materiality is *odd* [singulière] in many ways, the first of which is not to admit partition.' This indivisibility, says Derrida, is odd indeed, but becomes comprehensible if it is seen as an *idealization* of the phallus, whose integrity is necessary for the edification of the entire psychoanalytical system. With the phallus safely idealized and located in the voice, the so-called signifier acquires the 'unique, living, *non-mutilable integrity* [emphasis added, DB]' of the self-present spoken word, unequivocally pinned down to and by the *signified*.' Had the phallus been per(mal)-chance divisible or reduced to the status of a partial object, the whole edification would have crumbled down, and this is what has to be avoided at all cost" (Barbara Johnson, "The Frame of Reference: Poe, Lacan, Derrida," in *The Purloined Poe* [ed. John P. Muller and William J. Richards; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987] 225).

[148]My point of view is, therefore, somewhat different from that of Hurtado, *One God*, 11. He considers binitarian devotion itself as the novum of Christian Jews, albeit growing out of "Jewish" rootstock; whereas for me, the binitarianism is not specifically Christian, only its association with Jesus is. Here is perhaps the sharpest way to demonstrate the difference and similarity between our approaches. Hurtado writes: "given the cultic veneration of Jesus, the development of the concept of his preexistence is not such a big step" (Hurtado, *One God*, 13). Hurtado, of course, is well aware of Jewish notions of pre-existent Wisdom, but prefers to locate the association of these with Jesus as a secondary development growing out of worship of Jesus itself, while I would argue that the opposite development is much more intuitive, to wit, that Jesus was identified with the Word or with Sophia and then worshipped accordingly.

[149]Cf. "The Christ myth develops out of two subsidiary myths or narrative patterns of Judaism: the descent of the feminine divine hypostasis 'Wisdom' (Greek *Sophia*, Hebrew *Ḥokhmah*) and the narrative pattern featuring the paradigmatic righteous man, who suffers and is vindicated by God" (Pearson, "Emergence," 14).

[150]Dunn, *Partings*, 165–69, 188–94.

A contemporary analogy may be helpful here: No Jew can deny the doctrine that the Messiah is coming and be considered "orthodox" today, but many Jews consider those who regard the Lubavitcher Rebbe as having been the Messiah as heterodox, if not outright heretical.[151]

This historiographical movement from common "Jewish" Logos theology to Christology has been made by other Christian writers such as Justin (apparently independently of John[152]). A remarkable theological statement by that writer will show how vivid his notion of the Logos was, how similar in some ways to that of the Fourth Gospel, yet also different enough and unconnected enough to serve as an independent witness to Logos Theology. Justin writes:

> ὅτι ἀρχὴν πρὸ πάντων τῶν κτισμάτων ὁ θεὸς γεγέννηκε δύναμίν τινα ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ λογικήν, ἥτις καὶ δόξα κυρίου ὑπὸ τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ ἁγίου καλεῖται, ποτὲ δὲ υἱός, ποτὲ δὲ σοφία, ποτὲ δὲ ἄγγελος, ποτὲ δὲ θεός, ποτὲ δὲ κύριος, καὶ λόγος.[153]
>
> God has begotten as a Beginning before all His creatures a kind of Reasonable Power from Himself, which is also called by the Holy Spirit the Glory of the Lord, and sometimes Son, and sometimes Wisdom, and sometimes Angel, and sometimes God, and sometimes Lord and Word. (*Dialogue* 61.1)[154]

Clearly, and presumably without reference to the Fourth Gospel, Justin also knows of a midrash that reads the word "Beginning" (ἀρχή) of Gen 1:1 as a reference to the Logos. This can only, I would strongly argue, be via the sort of midrash that we find incorporated in the Targum and the Fourth Gospel, which takes that "Beginning" to be Sophia, Wisdom, via a detour through the verses: "God created me at the *Beginning* of his way (Prov 8:22) and also "The *Beginning* of *Wisdom* is the fear of the Lord" (Ps 111:10), as the midrash does.[155] We have thus in Justin precious corroborating evidence for such interpretation and such theology among Jews from which the traditions animating both the Evangelist and the apologist have drawn. In the beginning, God got from himself the being with the names Son, Wisdom, angel,[156] God, Lord, and Logos.

[151]And fascinatingly enough, there are indications that within the Lubavitch movement, there are those who consider the dead Rebbe as having been virtually divinized. Pearson ("Emergence," 15) has anticipated this analogy.

[152]Haenchen, *John*, 1:13; Helmut Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels: Their History and Development* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity, 1990) 246.

[153]Justin, *Dialogus cum Tryphone* (ed. Miroslav Marcovich; Patristische Texte und Studien 47; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1997) 174–75.

[154]Williams, *Dialogue*, 126.

[155]Interpretation by association is very common in midrash.

[156]For discussion of this appellation, see Hannah, *Michael*, 1 and throughout.

As M. J. Edwards has argued, "the womb of [Justin's] Logos-doctrine was the *Dialogue*, where the term is used to confer on Christ the powers that were already attributed in Jewish literature to the spoken and written utterance of God,"[157] and his final statement is even more lucent: "Our conclusion, therefore, is that in the two *Apologies*, no less than in the *Dialogue with Trypho*, Christ is the Logos who personifies the Torah. In Jewish thought the Word was the source of being, the origin of Law, the written Torah and a Person next to God. Early Christianity announced the incarnation of this Person, and Justin makes the further claims that Scripture is the parent of all truth among the nations, and that the Lord who is revealed to us in the New Testament is the author and the hermeneutic canon of the Old."[158] It follows, then, that in the Logos theology, both John and Justin represent old common Judaic patterns of religious thought, a way from which later rabbinism has parted.

As an emblem of this exchange, I would conclude with the following astonishing juxtaposition: θεὸν οὐδεὶς ἑώρακεν πώποτε· μονογενὴς θεὸς ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκεῖνος ἐξηγήσατο ("No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known," John 1:18) and רבי אליעזר בנו של רבי יוסי הגלילי אומר תשע מאות ושבעים וארבעה דורות קודם שנברא העולם היתה תורה כתובה ומונחת בחיקו של הקב״ה ואומרת שירה עם מלאכי השרת שנאמר ואהיה אצלו אמון ואהיה שעשועים יום יום משחקת לפניו ("Rabbi Eli^cezer the son of Rabbi Yose the Galilean says: Nine hundred and seventy four generations before the world was created, the Torah was written and lying in the bosom of the Holy Blessed One and singing song with the serving angels, as it says: 'I was his nursling/, or, and I was his little child/, or, I was his betrothed,[159] and I was daily his delight, playing before him at all times,' " Prov. 8:30).[160] It seems almost certain to me that the verse of the Gospel is based on an ancient midrash similar to the one found in the late rabbinic text, where the subject has been transferred from Wisdom (the Logos) to Torah.[161] I believe that the key to explaining this midrash (both the Gospel and the late rabbinic version) is, in fact, the common midrashic practice I have remarked on above—of building on a verse that is not cited in the text at all. In Num 11:12, we read: האנכי הריתי את כל העם הזה אם אנכי ילדתיהו כי תאמר אלי שאהו בחיקך כאשר ישא האמן

[157]Edwards, "Justin's Logos," 262.

[158]Ibid., 279.

[159]Suggested by one possible meaning for the LXX translation of the verse: ἤμην παρ' αὐτῷ ἁρμόζουσα. See also 2 Cor 11:2.

[160]*Aboth de Rabbi Nathan* (ed. Solomon Shechter; 1887; repr., New York: Philipp Feldheim, 1967) 91. *The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan* (trans. Judah Goldin; Yale Judaica Series; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955) 126–27.

[161]But more of this point anon. See Daniel Boyarin, "The Heresy of Rabbi Akiva," manuscript (Berkeley). Note that in the earlier midrashic text *Bere'shit Rabbah* (cited in n. 65), Wisdom and Torah have not yet been fully conflated.

את היונק ("Have I conceived all of this People; did I give birth to it, that you should say to me: 'Carry him in your bosom, as the nurse carries the child'?"). The word that I have translated "nurse" here—and from the context it would seem to mean nursing parent—is the active participle of which the crucial vocable in the Proverbs verse is the passive, and therefore, "nursling," "infant child." Moreover, from the verse in Numbers we learn that the nurse carries the nursling in her/his bosom, exactly as in the verse in John and the midrashic text. In other words, the text from Numbers connects the word in the Proverbs 8 verse referring to "Wisdom" as "nursling" to the image of being carried in the bosom of her father. For the rabbinic text, the beloved child that the Father carries in his bosom, the son or daughter of God, is the Torah; for the earlier midrash of the Fourth Gospel, she was the Logos, the Son.

The structure of the Prologue, then, as it is revealed in accordance with this mode of interpretation, moves from the pre-existent Logos which is not (yet) Christ and which could, and I believe did, subsist among many circles among first-century *Ioudaioi,* to the incarnation of the Logos in the man, also Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, called the Christ. Far from a supersessionist move from the particularist Torah to the universal Logos (as Epp would have it), the movement of the narrative is from a universal Jewish Logos theology to the particularism of Christology—and I put no pejorative force in that whatsoever. Of course, for the Evangelist, the Incarnation supplements the Torah—that much is explicit—but, for John, it is only because the *Logos Ensarkos* is a better teacher, a better exegete than the *Logos Asarkos*—ἐκεῖνος ἐξηγήσατο—that the Incarnation takes place.